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THREE SERMONS ON PUBLIC OCCASIONS,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

BY

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M.DCC.LXVI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

GEORGE

LORD LYTTELTON,

BARON OF FRANKLEY

IN THE COUNTY OF WORCESTER;

WHOSE WRITINGS

ADORNED WITH EVERY ATTIC GRACE

GENIUS BRINGS

TO THE SHRINE OF VIRTUE;

THESE DISCOURSES

ARE INSCRIBED.

A

SERMON

ON THE

WISDOM OF PROVIDENCE

IN THE

ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORLD.

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF

HIS MAJESTY's INAUGURATION,

OCT. 25, 1762, AT ST. MARY's.

THE SECOND EDITION.

DANIEL II. 20, 21.

Daniel anſwered, and ſaid, Bleſſed be the name of GOD *for ever and ever: for wiſdom and might are his. And he changeth the times and the ſeaſons: he removeth kings, and ſetteth up kings.*

IF we conſider the hiſtory of mankind merely as the work of human counſels, no proſpect can be more melancholy and diſpleaſing. We ſee nothing but unſteady and fluctuating deſigns; weak and periſhing attempts; a rude heap of tumultuous events lying in confuſion; kingdoms riſing after kingdoms, as it were by chance, aſtoniſhing the world for a while, and then ſinking into oblivion; and, in a word, all hiſtory broken into ten thouſand

fragments. But if we will take along with us to the ſtudy of hiſtory, a maxim from the inſpired volume, if reaſon will ſubmit to be taught by revelation, and to kindle its lamp at that ſacred flame, a new light will be ſpread over the obſcure maſs; and the hiſtoric page, which was before hardly legible, will become clear and perfectly intelligible. For though nothing but confuſion can be expected from weak and erring man, yet HE who is the fountain of wiſdom and might, is for ever at the head of all human affairs; the deſigns of heaven mixing with the deſigns of men ſubdue them into order, and give them a permanency which is not their own: and thus amidſt all the intricacies of interfering events and claſhing intereſts, one great and noble purpoſe of Providence is ſtill carried on, the general intereſts of virtue and religion.

This doctrine runs through all revelation, and is in the ſtrongeſt and moſt explicit terms delivered in the text. The prophet had been favoured with a view of thoſe grand revolutions that were to happen after the

the times of the great NEBUCHADNEZZAR, and had ſeen a ſucceſſion of empires ariſing after the Babyloniſh, all leading to, and terminating in, the eſtabliſhment of the Meſſiah's kingdom. Upon which he pours forth this ſublime addreſs to the God of heaven, in which he acknowledges his ſupremacy and ſovereign rule; and that all the viciſſitudes of times which hiſtory tells of, the changes of power, the elevation and overthrow of empires, are no other than parts of the great plan of adminiſtration conducted by his wiſe Providence.

What Daniel ſaw by prophetic intuition we read in the records of ages already paſt. Hiſtory therefore ſhould kindle in our breaſts the ſame ſentiments that prophecy did in his; ſhould fill us with the ſame veneration for our univerſal Lord, and lead us likewiſe " to bleſs the name of God for " ever and ever, convinced that wiſdom " and might are only his: that it is HE " who changeth the times and the ſea- " ſons, who removeth kings, and ſetteth " up kings."

I ſhall beg leave to purſue theſe reflections as a ſubject well ſuited to the preſent occaſion, and in the FIRST place to point out ſome of the marks of wiſdom that appear in the conſtitution and adminiſtration of the world; and then SECONDLY, to apply theſe general reflections to ourſelves of this nation, and to the preſent ſolemnity.

The former part of the ſubject will engage us in two diſtinct enquiries; and it ſhall be my endeavour

I. To ſhew, That the conſtitution of things by which the world is divided into many diſtinct ſocieties and kingdoms, and by which thoſe kingdoms become ſubject to changes, revolutions, and overthrow, is upon the whole favourable to virtue and the public good.

II. To prove from hiſtory, That the general courſe of human affairs, the progreſs of empire and dominion, the principal viciſſitudes of times and ſeaſons which have happened in the world, have been ſubſervient

vient to the eſtabliſhment and ſupport of religion.

I. I am firſt to ſhew, That the preſent conſtitution of the world is upon the whole favourable to virtue and the public good.

There are three ways in which mankind may poſſibly be ſuppoſed to exiſt. As firſt, in a ſtate of diſſipation and anarchy. But they could not long continue in this ſtate. For ſo far is it from being a ſtate of nature, though it hath generally been diſtinguiſhed by that title, that our nature would lead us as faſt as poſſible out of it. There is within us a ſociable and attractive principle, which joined with our mutual wants and dependencies, forms mankind into ſocieties, as naturally as the parts of matter run into diſtinct maſſes. And ſocieties of any kind once being formed, a common intereſt ariſes, which neceſſarily leads to laws, ſubordination, and government. Or, ſecondly, mankind may be ſuppoſed to exiſt under one univerſal government. But this being a machine too unwieldy for the management of human power,

would naturally reſolve itſelf into ſeveral ſmaller bodies. Theſe two conditions then lead alike to a third, which hath actually taken place in all ages, in which the world is divided into ſeveral independent ſocieties and governments. This alone hath a right to be conſidered as a ſtate of nature, for the ſame reaſon which leads us to call that the natural ſtate of the material world wherein it is diſtinguiſhed into a beautiful variety of bodies; and not that wherein it is reſolved into certain imaginary atoms, which are ſuppoſed to be the firſt principles of all bodies. With no kind of propriety can we call any other ſtate natural, but that to which our nature inclines us, and in which the laws of our nature take place. This ſtate gives many advantages to virtue, and in many ways promotes the public good.

Benevolence is the principle by which ſocieties are held together. But did it exiſt only in that degree in which it is extended to all mankind, the band would be too weak. Spread over the whole world, benevolence would have too large a field. To render it more active and uſeful it muſt be com-

compreſſed within narrower bounds. The diſtribution of mankind into various ſocieties, the riſe, the progreſs, the declenſion of thoſe ſocieties, are all plainly calculated to form, to ſtrengthen, to renew this ſocial bond. Too large a ſpace lay between private and univerſal love. Something was wanting to form a communication between them. The love of our country therefore was interpoſed; and through the various gradations of ſociety benevolence is led on from diſtance to diſtance, and is thus trained up by degrees to take the boldeſt flights. And as in a fine proſpect the ſight is not all at once loſt in a vaſt extent of empty air, but is carried forward from object to object to the utmoſt horizon; ſo in the ſocial affections there are many intermediate circles between the wideſt and the narroweſt, and from the love of family we advance by eaſy ſteps through friends, citizens, and countrymen, to the love of mankind.

No ſooner are mankind thrown into diſtinct ſocieties and governments than order ſtarts up out of confuſion, the rude and ſavage

ſavage multitudes, which before over-ran the earth, are reduced into well proportioned bodies, and the chaos becomes a creation. A new ſet of relations and duties ariſes, and a new field is opened to virtue. If we conſider only the internal conſtitution of any ſeparate kingdom, we ſee the laws of politics and good government riſing on thoſe of morals. If we go farther, and conſider the relations of kingdoms to each other, we ſee duties of a ſuperiour order riſing ſtill higher than the former, and giving birth to the law of nations. Mankind combined into bodies are capable of many great enterprizes, for which they would be otherwiſe abſolutely unfit. The ſubjects of every government are united by a common intereſt, and act as if they were informed by one common ſoul. The powers of every kind are encreaſed, and become equal to the greateſt attempts. Works of public utility are ſet on foot, manufactures are eſtabliſhed, commerce is extended, arts are improved, and public virtue diſpenſes all its bleſſings.

Behold a virtuous prince at the head of an obedient people, exerciſing the godlike power

power of extending happineſs to millions; and you will hardly be able to perſuade yourſelf that you do not ſee ſomething more than human. And though this ſupreme lot of human felicity falls indeed to the ſhare of few; yet in a well regulated government, every member, in proportion to his ſtation and abilities, hath an enlarged ſphere of action, a capacity of doing good, beyond what he could have had under any other condition.

It can be thought no juſt objection to this plan of adminiſtration, that this encreaſed power is often miſapplied. Heaven furniſhes man with powers and abilities. The application of thoſe powers to good or ill purpoſes conſtitutes the merit or demerit of every man's character, and therefore the direction of them is ordinarily left to his free-will guided by proper lights.

But in fact in this conſtitution of things proviſion is made with no leſs wiſdom for the checking and controuling of vice, than to give ſtrength and ſucceſs to virtue. The laws ſuſtained by the collected power of a people

people operate ſtrongly againſt the vices of individuals, and lay ſome reſtraint at leaſt upon wicked princes. Nay even in thoſe kingdoms where princes are above the controul of laws, their vices are confined within ſome certain bounds. The neighbouring ſtates and kingdoms form a barrier around them which they cannot without difficulty paſs. By their vigilance the pernicious deſigns of an ambitious prince are reſtrained. Their jealouſy confines and often puniſhes his ambition. And thus the tempeſt falls upon a ſingle ſpot, which otherwiſe might have carried deſolation over half the world.

If kingdoms were virtuous they would be everlaſting. But as this can hardly happen, it is for the intereſt of virtue that they ſhould fall when they become corrupted. To ſee more clearly the marks of wiſdom in the fall of empires, we will briefly conſider their natural courſe, and the circumſtances that uſually accompany their origin, their progreſs, and their decline.

Kingdoms

Kingdoms in their infancy are under a neceſſity of cultivating the hardy and manly virtues. Nothing but this internal ſtrength can enable them to reſiſt the acts of violence to which they are ever expoſed from ſome powerful neighbour, and to ſurmount thoſe difficulties with which they muſt continually ſtruggle. Temperance and frugality are the natural produce of the times, the vigorous growth of a barren ſoil. But this is not all. The ſubjects of an infant ſtate are united amongſt each other by the ſtrongeſt ties. The common intereſt is felt by all, and is at that time ſo clear and ſimple a thing that it cannot be miſtaken. The connection between public and private good is ſo evident, that no one attempts to ſeparate them, much leſs to ſet up an oppoſition between them. Every one ſees that he has no way of purſuing his own intereſt but by means of the public. Every eye therefore is fixed on the public ſafety, and even watches with jealouſy over the intereſts of their fellow ſubjects, becauſe every danger, though but of a part, threatens ruin to the whole. The proſperity, the ſafety of every little family is involved in the common weal;

every

every public loſs ſhakes each private fortune, and every acquiſition to the public ſtrengthens and enriches every individual. In a word, in ſuch a ſtate virtue is ſeldom either neglected or unrewarded. It is of ſuch immediate ſervice to the public, that it is eagerly ſought for every where, drawn from its obſcurity, and becauſe every one partakes in its benefits, is applauded by every voice.

That activity and ſtrength of conſtitution which is natural to kingdoms in their early periods, cannot fail of bringing them forwards, of extending their dominions and encreaſing their power, till at length from a concurrence of various cauſes theſe principles are weakened and loſt. Proſperity, eaſe, indulgence, weakneſs, overthrow, follow each other in a natural train. Nor is it only that the ſtrength of individuals is impaired by the opportunities of eaſe and indulgence. In an extenſive and flouriſhing kingdom many circumſtances contribute to break that union amongſt its ſubjects in which its original ſtrength conſiſted, to nurſe the ſelfiſh paſſions, and to weaken the ſocial affections. There is no longer

that

that cloſe connection which before ſubſiſted between the public and private good, which made public ſucceſs the greateſt private bleſſing that could happen. Men now begin to look upon theſe as two very different objects; and as private intereſt enlarges and becomes more conſiderable, the public diminiſhes in their eyes, and they behold it with more indifference. In a wide extended territory there is not that common feeling for each other, which makes the good of every one the general concern. The fortunes of individuals may periſh, nay whole provinces may fall, while the central parts of this vaſt body hardly feel the ſhock. The habitual application which every ſubject gives to the care of his private fortune contracts the affections inſtead of enlarging them, draws them off from the public, and centers them within his own narrow concerns. The purſuit of commerce, and of all gainful arts, the acquiſition of riches, extent of private property, love of pleaſure, ambition of honours; all have a ſtrong tendency this way. In proportion as they feed private and ſelfiſh love, they weaken the love of the public. Competitions ariſe; ſeparate

parate intereſts are purſued every where croſſing and interfering with each other; virtue is ſo far from meeting with public encouragement, that jealouſy and envy join with every faſhionable accompliſhment to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs it as a dangerous rival: and thus is the band weakened by which ſociety is held together, and the way is prepared for its diſſolution.

If it be aſked how far a kingdom may with ſafety extend its dominions, and at what period of encreaſe it may be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt in its utmoſt perfection; the reply muſt be, that this depends indeed upon various circumſtances in the ſituation and genius of a people. Yet this general rule may aſſiſt us in forming the eſtimate, that a kingdom then ſubſiſts in its fulleſt and beſt proportion, when the love of country forms a juſt mean between private and public love. * Below this period, patriotiſm is not ſufficiently

* This was the caſe of the antient patriarchal governments; and we have numerous inſtances to the ſame purpoſe in the hords, the tribes, the clans of modern times.

ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed from private affection: * beyond it, it begins to be confounded with univerſal. A ſociety too ſmall wants the requiſite power: a ſociety too large wants the requiſite union. And this ſhews the wiſdom of Providence in laying out the world in general into kingdoms of moderate dimenſions.

Often doth heaven interpoſe to check the progreſs of corruption, and by wholeſome ſeverities to ſave a licentious people haſtening to ruin. War and the whole train of natural calamities, come the miniſters of Providence to correct the abuſes of proſperity, and to reſtore the intereſts of decayed virtue. Then doth a nation, alarmed at the danger, turn back to thoſe principles from which it had departed; private intereſt once more awakens a concern for the public;

* This was the caſe of the Roman empire, and of that which is ſometimes called the Macedonian, and ſometimes the Grecian, but which might with more propriety be called the Alexandrine empire; becauſe it was not the work of a nation, but, what is peculiar to itſelf, was raiſed by one man, and fell with him.

the common danger again unites a people over whom every better principle had loſt its power; the importance of virtue to the public ſervice is again diſcovered, and virtue comes once more into repute.

But if a people is ſo far ſunk in profligacy that all theſe admonitions are loſt upon them, if the maſter of the vineyard cometh year after year ſeeking for fruit and findeth none, then how juſtly doth that decree go forth, "Cut it down, why "cumbereth it the ground?" And mark how favourable to virtue is the event, and how well its intereſts are preſerved even in the extirpation and overthrow of kingdoms. For it is not only that a maſs of corruption is ſwept away, and a ſcene wherein vice was triumphant is brought to a concluſion; but where a depraved people falls, ſeveral new ſtates and kingdoms riſe upon its ruins. A brave and hardy race ſprings up, amongſt whom are again cultivated all thoſe virtues which are familiar to kingdoms in their early periods. And thus are the ſeeds of virtue continually ſown.

Having

II. Having taken this ſhort view of the marks of wiſdom that appear in the conſtitution of the world, we will now have recourſe to hiſtory, and endeavour to prove from facts, that the general courſe of human affairs, the progreſs of empire and dominion, the principal viciſſitudes of times and ſeaſons which have happened in the world, have been ſubſervient to the eſtabliſhment and ſupport of religion.

In order to this, I need only appeal to certain undeniable and well known facts.

If we look back to the original diſtribution of mankind into diſtinct and ſeparate nations, we find, from the only authentic record of that event, that though this ſcattering of them abroad over the face of the whole earth, was inflicted as an immediate puniſhment for ſome daring attempt, yet was it, as puniſhments ſent by heaven always are, at the ſame time a bleſſing. By the diſuniting of mankind, and breaking them into ſmaller ſocieties, which was the neceſſary conſequence of introducing a variety of languages amongſt them, that cor-

ruption, which ſoon took place, was effectually prevented from becoming univerſal. For whilſt they continued in one body, corruption once begun might eaſily be continued, and univerſally diffuſed, like motion through a maſs of water. But when they were claſſed out into various diviſions and ſubdiviſions, corruption might indeed ſtill ſpread itſelf over that diviſion where it had its beginning, but could not ſo eaſily be propagated farther. It would meet with oppoſition in paſſing from circle to circle, and wherever the communication was broken, its progreſs would be interrupted and retarded. The world would reſemble different vortices, each maintaining its own proper motion.

But ſtrong as theſe natural fences were by which the bulk of mankind was now reduced into different ſocieties, they were not yet ſtrong enough to reſiſt the force of encreaſing corruption. It was thought proper therefore for the ſecurity of revelation, and the reconveyance of it in due time to all mankind, to take one particular people from the midſt of mankind, to cut them

them off in a great meaſure from all intercourſe with other nations, and to form them into a ſelect independant ſociety. For this end it became expedient to prevent all thoſe connections and alliances with others which they muſt naturally have formed had they been ſuffered to grow up to power and diſtinction in the ſame place; and to guard againſt the propagation of thoſe prevailing corruptions which could not fail of gaining a ſtrong influence over them by means of that veneration which they would naturally have entertained for the cuſtoms of their country. They had therefore no natural country, no native ſituation like the reſt of mankind; but were tranſplanted from ſoil to ſoil, till they were at laſt fixed in a wonderful manner in that which was prepared for their reception. ABRAHAM, the great parent of this people, was torn from all his deareſt connections, was doomed to a life of perpetual exile, to become a pilgrim without the hopes of an eſtabliſhment, and a wanderer amongſt ſtrangers. He was no more to return to his native land, no more to think of it indeed without pain and bluſhing for

its degeneracy *. The patriarchs, his immediate ſucceſſors, purſued the ſame erratic and paſtoral life; and it was not till after they had been prepared by the ſufferings of ſlavery, and by a rigorous diſcipline due to their diſobedience of forty years in a deſart, that their deſcendants were truſted with the poſſeſſion of the promiſed land. Then by the force of miracles, and of many peculiar inſtitutions, a boundary was formed around them of uncommon ſtrength. So much care was neceſſary to guard againſt the contagion of hereditary and national corruptions.

But

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* "By faith ABRAHAM, when he was called to "go out into a place which he ſhould after receive "for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not "knowing whither he went." Heb. xi. 8. A man, venerable for his years and piety, ſent out from his country, his kindred, and his father's houſe, to ſpend the remainder of his days amongſt ſtrangers, a pilgrim in a foreign land, and a wanderer in the world; is a picture that hath ſomething in it wonderfully ſtrikeing and pathetic. But when we conſider him as under the leading hand of Providence, executing a divine commiſſion, and the father of bleſſings to all mankind, we no longer compaſſionate, but admire the great ſufferer, and think an exile like this ſuperior to all domeſtic honours.

But as this temporary advantage was not given to this people for their own ſakes only (for they ſeem indeed to have been altogether unworthy of it) but for the common good *, therefore it is remarkable that their ſituation was ſuch as brought them into frequent contact with the moſt conſiderable monarchies of ancient times. They were ſeated in the center of the Egyptian, the Babyloniſh, the Aſſyrian, the Perſian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires. Into theſe great kingdoms frequent channels were opened from that ſmall diſtrict within which the true revelation was at that time confined; and thus new ſupplies of wiſdom

* This is clear from the language of revelation throughout, in which from the beginning ſalvation is always ſpoken of as an univerſal bleſſing. The promiſe to ABRAHAM was, "In thy ſeed ſhall ALL "THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH be bleſſed." More need not be ſaid at preſent to ſhew that religion never was of that narrow and contracted ſpirit which ſome would aſcribe to it, but was always conducted on principles of the moſt free and unbounded benevolence. If it had not been limited for a while it muſt have been loſt; and the general communication of revealed truth which chriſtianity hath made, could not have been brought about, but by its temporary confinement.

and divine truth were at fit ſeaſons diffuſed through the world.

It may be proper to add, that thoſe ancient kingdoms to which Providence granted the longeſt duration, were, in their early periods at leaſt, famed for wiſdom and virtue.

As the eaſtern part of the world was firſt peopled, great and extenſive empires were firſt formed there, and there learning and the arts were firſt cultivated and brought to perfection. But whilſt ſcience and empire flouriſhed in the eaſt, a power was riſing by degrees in the weſtern world which was one day to ſurpaſs all that had gone before it. Unknown to the proud empires of the eaſt which vainly flattered themſelves that they divided the world amongſt them, this power was then ſilently advancing from conqueſt to conqueſt, and the Roman Eagle was by degrees ſtrengthening her wing, and preparing to take her flight round half the globe. The ſucceſſion of theſe great monarchies led by degrees to that favourable conjuncture, that fulneſs of time which

was

was fitted for the appearance of chriſtianity. They aroſe after each other, and enlarged upon each other, till at length the Roman abſorbed all the reſt; and compleated that ſpacious field, that wide-extended civilized empire, through which chriſtianity made its rapid progreſs.

To favour this great event, and to render the firſt appearance of our holy religion at once more auguſt and more ſecure, theſe ſtruggles of ambition, theſe long conteſts for dominion, ſubſided at length into an univerſal peace. That ſtormy ocean which had been for ages in continual agitation, now all at once ſunk into a ſurpriſing calm, and the earth was inſtantly overſpread with tranquillity to receive the Prince of Peace.

The introduction of chriſtianity was preceeded likewiſe by a remarkable degree of knowledge, and the illumination of ſcience fore-ran the light of the goſpel. Egypt, Perſia, Greece, and Rome poured from their ſeparate urns thoſe ſtreams of ſcience, which joining in one great flood overſpread the vaſt Roman empire. And thus was revelation

lation enabled to give a moſt illuſtrious proof of its coming from heaven, by diffuſing over the world all at once a light ſuperiour to all collected human wiſdom in its brighteſt glory.

And need we aſk who conducted all theſe great events, and who brought them to a concurrence? At the ſame period of time, the promiſed Meſſiah came: the greateſt empire that ever exiſted was in its greateſt glory: learning flouriſhed beyond what it had done in any former age: and the world was bleſſed with univerſal peace. A coincidence of facts, every one of which in itſelf is ſo extraordinary, that it cannot be paralelled by any other times, clearly points out the hand of that ſupreme over-ruling power, who from eternity beheld the great plan of his providence through its whole extent, "who alone can declare the end from the "beginning, and from ancient times the "things that are not yet done, ſaying, MY "COUNSEL ſhall ſtand, and I will do all "my pleaſure *."

To

* Iſaiah xlvii. 10.

To put this beyond all doubt let it be obſerved, that theſe events took their riſe in remoteſt ages, and were prepared in times and countries far diſtant from and unknown to each other. Empire which ſprang up amidſt the ſeven hills of Rome; ſcience nurſt amidſt the academic groves; and religion from the obſcure vales of Judea, all met at one grand criſis. To each other unknown, they muſt have been conducted by the hand of providence. They met, and peace from heaven crowned them with her olive.

It was neceſſary for the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, that it ſhould be furniſhed with every kind of evidence, and approved by every teſt to which it could be brought. It was not ſufficient therefore that it went through the ſharpeſt inquiſitions of philoſophy; it muſt likewiſe undergo the ſeverer trials of perſecution. Hence the times of trouble and diſtreſs that followed hard upon the Auguſtan tranquillity. Behold here then the cleareſt footſteps of a divine interpoſition: behold even thoſe to whom our holy religion could not be known, joining with

its

its bitterest enemies to bring about its establishment. For christianity PYTHAGORAS and PLATO taught; for christianity CÆSAR triumphed, and NERO persecuted.

No sooner had its truth been established by every kind of evidence, than it was taken under the protection of the civil power. But though the church gained by this means new strength and support against its enemies, and its triumph was compleated over all human opposition, yet was it in some respects hurt by the connection. Whilst it lay under oppression it preserved its pure evangelical spirit untainted, and nothing was seen amongst its professors but that meekness, humility, and patience, that holy zeal, and heavenly charity, with which the gospel must ever inspire all true believers. But the offspring of this new alliance was a mixed race, which partook at least as much of the temper of its worldly as its divine parent. Ambition, and a thirst of encreasing wealth and power, crept into the church; and at least as much as the state was sanctified, the church was secularized in return. It became every day more

more and more anxious about its temporal advantages and privileges, and of courſe more careleſs and indifferent about its true and ſpiritual intereſts. Pride, and a luſt of power, baniſhed from the breaſts of CHURCHMEN every chriſtian grace: a ſpiritual tyranny, a thing unknown to the goſpel, was erected; and chriſtian Rome, without the watchful care of Providence, would have been as fatal to chriſtianity, as pagan Rome had been, under the direction of Providence, friendly.

But the hand of heaven averted the calamity. Power and learning were at once withdrawn from the church when it came to be corrupted. The vaſt Roman empire fell; and a great number of Gothic kingdoms aroſe on its ruins.

And mark the care of providence for the intereſts of religion in this event. The ſeeds of chriſtianity which had been ſpread over the whole body of the Roman empire, were preſerved in all thoſe fragments into which it was now broken, and even conveyed by many of its barbarous conquerors beyond

beyond its utmoſt limits. There they took root and grew up at leiſure, whilſt by the ſame means a check was given to the ſpreading of errors and hereſies which now began to abound, by interrupting once more that free communication between the diſtant parts of the world which had been eſtabliſhed for the ſervice of religion. Witneſs the * Arian errors, which ſprang up in the eaſtern empire, and were not till after much oppoſition introduced into the weſt. There was ſtill ſome corner where truth was received and nouriſhed up uninfected. Thus was the world laid open to facilitate the propagation of truth, and again divided into ſmaller parts to hinder the ſpreading of error.

In the mean time the remains of learning were ſaved in the eaſt from amidſt the general wreck, by the removal of the ſeat of empire from Rome to Conſtantinople; which

* Conſtance favoriſa l'Arianiſme, & Jovien la doctrine du concile de Nicée. Valens fait la guerre aux Catholiques, & Gracien de même que Valentinien aux hérétiques. MABLY Obſervations ſur les Romains, vol. i. p. 234.

which otherwiſe muſt have periſhed entirely when the northern nations over-ran the weſtern empire. A frightful night of ſuperſtition and error ſucceeded in Europe; in the midſt of which ignorance at leaſt performed this ſervice; ſhe lent her veil to throw over the ſhameful degeneracy of thoſe days, and in ſome meaſure to cover and conceal them from the public view.

In theſe times of darkneſs were engendered all thoſe foul corrupt doctrines, with which, at the returning dawn of reaſon and learning, the world ſaw with aſtoniſhment the chriſtian church over-run. For learning again came from its retreat in a corner of Arabia; and thoſe ſparks of ſcience which were brought into Europe by the Grecian ſcholars, exiles from their country at the taking of Conſtantinople, being ſcattered wide over the weſt, and there cheriſhed and blown up into a flame, helped to enlighten us in the glorious work of reformation. Again doth learning flouriſh; reaſon again aſſerts the free exerciſe of her powers; thoſe errors with which the face of religion was deformed, gradually diſappear,

pear, and the goſpel is ſeen once more in its native purity. The ſpiritual tyranny ſeems to be faſt upon its decline; thoſe chains with which it had bound moſt of the powers of Europe in the long reign of ignorance and ſuperſtition ſeem to be falling off; Rome herſelf begins to be aſhamed of her monſtrous doctrines, to palliate and cloak them, and to ſhew a modeſty which may give us ſome hopes of her return at laſt to the obedience of that ſacred truth from which ſhe hath long departed. And oh, may we ſee the happy day when the true goſpel-light and liberty ſhall be every where reſtored!

Theſe facts, briefly touched as they have been, are ſufficient to ſhew that an ever watchful Providence guides the courſe of human affairs, and directs all events in the end to favour his own great purpoſes, which are in truth no other than to ſupport the intereſts of religion, and thereby the good of mankind.

We are not indeed to ſuppoſe from what hath been advanced, that every king or governor

governor is raiſed up immediately by the hand of providence. The ſupreme ruler in general ſuffers the natural courſe of things to take place, nor doth he, except in extraordinary caſes, controul the will of princes. Yet we may upon good grounds believe that HE oftener interpoſes in the fate of kings than of perſons in inferiour ſtations. Becauſe by kings thouſands are influenced. As in a grand machine the maſter's hand touches one of thoſe principal ſprings by which a number of inferiour wheels are guided in their motion. In particular, when wicked men riſe to power, his wiſdom is manifeſted in bringing forth good out of evil, and making their pernicious deſigns ſubſervient to ſome uſeful end of his providence. And though we may not be able to diſcern the hand of heaven in every particular incident of hiſtory, yet the guidance of ſupreme wiſdom is extremely viſible in the whole plan, or in any conſiderable portion of it. The great laws of providence are accommodated as far as may be to the free-will of man; and the working up of theſe together muſt make a mixture, which to every juſt obſerver muſt appear worthy

of admiration, though it cannot have all the luſtre of pure, unclouded, heavenly wiſdom. It is the tempering and according of the divine and human ſchemes together, which makes that beautiful tiſſue of which hiſtory is compoſed; where the grand lines of order are ſtill preſerved amidſt much ſeeming irregularity. On this plan ſome little deviations will ariſe, ſome ſhort interruptions the perverſeneſs of man will occaſion: but the main ſtream of events all the while flows on in the direction which heaven hath appointed them.

All human power and wiſdom are indeed by their own nature confined within very narrow limits; and all the deſigns of man, as far as they depend on man, muſt ſoon come to a concluſion. But by the overruling will of providence they are often carried out far beyond their original aim; and their train of conſequences made to extend into remoteſt ages. Thus, if we regard the motions of the ſecondary planets alone, we ſee them haſtening to their period, and their revolutions quickly returning into themſelves. Yet all the while

that

that they ſeem to purſue only their own particular courſe, they are by a ſuperiour influence of their primary planets carried along in another orbit far more extenſive than their own.

The application of this doctrine to ourſelves is extremely obvious. For ſince it appears that kingdoms are raiſed and upheld by providence for the good of mankind and the ſupport of virtue, it follows, that if we would engage the bleſſing of heaven on our country, we muſt firmly adhere to whatever principles are the moſt excellent in our conſtitution, and maintain every worthy part of our national character. Give me leave then to call to mind ſome principal parts of that character by which this nation hath been diſtinguiſhed in former times, and for the ſake of which it hath been hitherto preſerved. The cultivation of theſe will be our only true way of expreſſing a love for our country. For they only can be ſuppoſed to love their country who appear anxious to ſupport the dignity of its character.

And in theſe doubtful and dangerous times, where can we begin better than by reflecting on that liberty, and thoſe numerous bleſſings belonging to liberty, which have been handed down to us by our great forefathers; together with that firmneſs and bravery which they ever ſhewed in defence of theſe bleſſings?

Our excellent conſtitution hath been a work of ages. The ſeeds of liberty were ſown early in our land, but it required much time to bring them to maturity. Our kingdom and our conſtitution grew up together both from rude beginnings. Thoſe ſmall diſtricts into which theſe iſlands were at firſt divided, after many ſharp conflicts amongſt themſelves, were by degrees united to each other, till at length our kingdom grew up to its full proportion. And ſo much do the ſtrength and welfare of our country depend upon this union, that little do they regard, or at leaſt underſtand, its true intereſt, who would endeavour to divide again a kingdom which it hath been the work of ages to unite; and to reduce it back to its firſt principles, by tracing over

again

again that line of diſtinction between its ſeveral parts which hath been happily obliterated. Our conſtitution in the ſame manner, which was in its original an imperfect mixture of an untamed wildneſs with arbitrary power, after various ſtruggles in which it was more than once brought into the utmoſt danger, came at length to that well poiſed frame of government wherein all the parts ballance and ſuſtain each other.

It is truly remarkable that our kingdom grew up to that magnitude which ſeems to have been marked out for it by nature, much about the ſame time that our conſtitution likewiſe was brought to perfection. It is ſtill more remarkable, that theſe events followed cloſe upon that happy æra which ſaw the reformation compleated and eſtabliſhed upon a firm baſis. When we had received the true religion of the goſpel, we were then in the eye of heaven worthy of liberty and dominion. For who but the hand of that providence which rules in a ſecret manner all the movements of this world, could carry on together the progreſs of theſe three independent works, and guide three

diſtinct chains of events through times ſo various, and through ſuch hazardous revolutions, in ſuch a manner that they ſhould all at laſt meet in one point? And now united they form one chain, which by the bleſſing of heaven ſeems conſtructed for a long duration.

Already have our conqueſts told to all the world that we do not at this time want to be convinced of the value of theſe bleſſings; that Britons want no exhortations to ſtir them up to the defence of a kingdom, a conſtitution, a religion, like theirs. But yet it muſt be acknowledged, that in the beginning of this war ſomething did ſeem to be wanting to call forth that ſpirit amongſt us which hath ſince blazed ſo bright. The period cannot be forgotten when our fortune on a ſudden was changed. It cannot be forgotten that our courage ſeemed to revive, and our ſucceſs commenced, at that æra when the ſyſtem of venality, corruption, and party-adminiſtration, which had ſo long been our diſgrace, was publicly diſclaimed: when the abettors of that ſhameful ſyſtem, ſtruck dumb at the greatneſs of the attempt, ſaw

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in ſilent aſtoniſhment the machine of government put in motion without that falſe biaſs of corruption which they had ſaid muſt of neceſſity be hung upon it; and moving forward to heights of glory unknown to former times: when faction, awed by ſuperiour virtue, loſt for a while all power of oppoſition, and gave an opportunity of proving to the world what great things might be done on principles of diſintereſted virtue, and true public ſpirit: and when the power of theſe noble principles united for a while all parties, and every thing was forgotten but the common good. At that æra of union and public ſpirit it was that a ſeries of victories commenced which have aſtoniſhed all Europe. And therefore our ſucceſs muſt ſeem the bleſſing of heaven on public virtue *.

* Amongſt thoſe national virtues which may have contributed to draw down the bleſſing of heaven on our public meaſures, we muſt not forget that charity, the favourite virtue of heaven, for which this nation hath long been diſtinguiſhed, and which in the courſe of this war hath been freely extended even to our enemies in diſtreſs.

But, in the ſecond place; Britain is not characteriſed by the rougher and warlike endowments alone; ſhe is no leſs adorned by the ſoſter and more amiable accompliſhments of peace. She has trophies ſtill more glorious than thoſe which have been won in the field of battle. Her triumphs in the cauſe of truth are not leſs numerous than in the cauſe of liberty. And whilſt we of this place cannot be thought to be unconcerned in the former part of this exhortation, ſince the principles of true honour and virtue which are here taught, are the only foundation of true courage, yet are we more immediately intereſted in the cultivation, and in the ſupport of this part of our national character. Our immediate province it is to contribute as far as we are able to the encouragement and improvement of all uſeful ſcience, and to lay ourſelves out in defending and enlarging thoſe acquiſitions which our country hath made in knowledge. But chiefly we muſt remember, that it is not the intereſts of learning alone which are intruſted in our hands. Learning hath in all times maintained a cloſe alliance with virtue and religion. When

after

after a long exile it again returned to the weſtern world, it returned but to aſſiſt in the revival of true religion: and ever ſince that time have they been making their progreſs over Europe together. With what zeal then muſt it inſpire us in our ſtudies, to hope, that under providence they may be ſubſervient to the ſacred intereſts of religion! And if even pagan learning was rendered ſerviceable to chriſtianity at its firſt introduction into the world, how great would be our reproach if chriſtian learning ſhould not!

This leads me to conſider a third part of our national character, and which alone can ſtamp a true value on thoſe which have been already mentioned, a zeal for true religion. Religion hath found an aſylum in England when driven from every other part of the world. When ignorance, ſuperſtition, and eccleſiaſtical tyranny have elſewhere uſurped her place, England hath ſtood firm in her cauſe; hath reaſoned, hath acted, hath ſuffered in her defence; hath maintained her in all her rights, and planted her in her native purity in foreign lands.

To

To the ſervice of religion ſhould all our ſucceſſes, all the triumphs whether of our valour or our learning be devoted. And oh, may we not here indulge the pleaſing hope, that ſome circumſtances in the preſent ſituation of the world ſeem to foretell the approach of that glorious time, when chriſtianity ſhall be univerſally eſtabliſhed! Why elſe, and to what other end hath it been ordained, that the chriſtian powers are almoſt the only commercial powers, and that all the great diſcoveries in the new weſtern world have been made by them? And ſtill more particularly, why hath it been ordained that we, the moſt conſiderable amongſt the profeſſors of the truly reformed chriſtianity, have of all others the moſt extenſive commerce, and ſeem likely to poſſeſs the moſt extenſive dominions in this new world? We can hardly ſuppoſe theſe ſtriking circumſtances to be the effect of chance, or to be permitted only for mere temporal advantages. Chriſtianity can never act under more favourable circumſtances. Paganiſm and Mahometaniſm lie ſtill; whilſt Chriſtianity, with all the means of converſion in her hands, carries on a conſtant intercourſe with

with the remoteſt corners of the world. The period ſeems to be haſtening on, when the diſcovery of the whole globe ſhall be compleated, and when by means of commerce all parts of the world ſhall be known to each other. Do not all theſe things ſeem clearly to be a prelude to that glorious time (for the time will come) when "the earth ſhall be filled with the know-"ledge of the glory of the Lord, as the "waters cover the ſea: when God will "turn to the people a pure language, that "they may all call upon the name of the "Lord, to ſerve him with one conſent: "and when the Lord ſhall be king over "all the earth?" *

Such is the dignity of that national character which we are called upon to ſupport. Whilſt therefore we reflect with veneration on thoſe great names with which the records of our country abound; thoſe worthies who have gained or eſtabliſhed our rights; thoſe exalted geniuſes who have employed their talents in the diſcoveries and improvements

* HAB. ii. 14. ZEPH. iii. 9. ZECH. xiv. 9.

ments of uſeful arts for the benefit of mankind; thoſe awful men who have defended the truth with all the powers of reaſoning and learning, who have bled, who have fallen for their religion—the great examples ſhould fire us, ſhould animate us to the defence of our civil and religious liberties, and inſpirit us with a noble emulation to act the part of good citizens and good chriſtians, to practiſe virtue and charity, and by all the means that heaven hath put in our power, to promote the public good. We ſhould remember what their examples have taught us, that to be a BRITON, is not merely to be born in a certain climate, to be a native of a flouriſhing and beautiful iſland, bleſſed with a temperate air and a fruitful ſoil, where art and nature pour forth all their riches: it is to be more, a patron of liberty, learning, and religion.

It is with a peculiar pleaſure that we can ſurvey our national character at this time, when the day naturally mingles with every amiable part of it the idea of the beſt of ſovereigns.

That

That the liberties of his people are dear to him we had an early proof. It was almoſt the firſt act of his reign to put forth his hand to ſtrengthen a weak part of our conſtitution; and that not ſome diſputed point of the royal prerogative, but a part in which the rights and liberties of the ſubject were deeply concerned, and where they lay moſt expoſed to the attacks of ſome future tyrant. This he did by placing the Guardians of the laws as much as poſſible above the reach even of royal influence. An act which ſhewed at once that he underſtood, and loved, the conſtitution of his country. And conſiſtently with this beginning, we ſee him ſteadily carrying on the operations of government on the ſame free and generous principles, which ſhed ſo bright a luſtre round the ſetting ſun of his royal anceſtor: no longer ruling by a party, no longer ſupporting his adminiſtration by the force of corruption, but contented to recommend his meaſures to his ſubjects by their uprightneſs and integrity alone.

His love of learning cannot be called in queſtion, ſince he himſelf is known to have

a taſte for letters, and to have made a conſiderable progreſs in them. Nor can we of this place forget, as one proof of his benevolence to learning ſufficiently flattering to ourſelves, with how open and pleaſing an aſpect we have been more than once received to his royal preſence. To this we may add, that his care for the advancement of learning hath been lately extended to ſome infant colonies of learning in a far diſtant part of his dominions *.

Of his regard for virtue and religion his whole life is one proof. Far from yielding to thoſe uncommon temptations with which a monarch, a youthful monarch, is always ſurrounded; far from thinking that his elevated ſtation can give a ſanction to liberties which would be condemned in an inferiour ſtation, we ſee him ambitious only of leading the way in duty, and treading in the path of virtue with all the ſeverity of the hoary ſage. Already hath he, by the force of

* Alluding to the royal bounty which accompanied the Letters Patent, authoriſing a public collection for the benefit of the colleges of NEW YORK and PHILADELPHIA.

of his example, checked that unbounded levity, that univerſal diſſipation and attachment to pleaſure, to which all ranks ſeemed to be devoted. Already hath he ſeverely diſcountenanced that criminal love of play, which hath involved ſo many fortunes and ſo many characters in ruin; and which was come to that daring height of impiety as to have thrown off all ſenſe of decency, all awe of religion; ſo as to be reſtrained by no force of laws, no regard to ſeaſons ſet apart for the moſt ſacred purpoſes. Already hath he nobly attempted at leaſt to bring religion again into credit amongſt the great and faſhionable part of the nation, by his own conſtant attendance on the public worſhip of God, and his exemplary behaviour there; by the influence of religion ſhining through every relation of life; by manifeſting a conſtant ſenſe of his dependance on the King of kings, and thus ſhewing that he hath made a juſt eſtimate of all human greatneſs. May the work of reformation proſper in his hands; and may virtue deſcending from the throne ſpread itſelf amongſt every rank of the people!

Theſe colours are not ſpread by the pencil of adulation: far be baſe born flattery from every free Britiſh heart; far hence, from this land of liberty, let it fly, to ſome leſs happy region, where a people of ſlaves trembles at the nod of a tyrant. Or ſhould there be found even Britons ſo degenerate as to ſtoop to the mean art of ſlaves; at leaſt let nothing ſervile or ignoble ever enter within the precincts of theſe venerable ſeats, where nothing but liberal and manly ſentiments ſhould be nouriſhed; where the principles of true liberty ſhould be early infuſed into the tender minds of thoſe who come under our care, and their ſouls filled with every great and noble purpoſe.—But it is our duty to enforce and recommend loyalty both by precept and example; and loyalty can never be ſo effectually recommended, as where it can be planted in the heart and the affections. It is our duty by every motive to recommend piety and a regard for religion. And whilſt bad examples are every where ſpreading their fatal contagion, it would be ſacrificing too much to delicacy, to ſuffer ſo fair an occaſion, as this ſolemnity gives us, of applying a great example

ample to the intereſts of virtue, to be loſt.

But to conclude. Whilſt we glory in the title of Engliſhmen and Britons, let us not forget that we are to ſupport the ſtill higher titles of Men and of Chriſtians. Let us remember, that however reaſonable and praiſe-worthy it may be at preſent to cultivate the more private affections, the love of a family, a particular ſociety, a country; yet the time will come, when all theſe partial affections, theſe narrow attachments ſhall be obliterated; when the godlike plan of chriſtianity ſhall have its full effect, when our hearts ſhall be enlarged, and every boſom filled with univerſal benevolence. The time will come when all diſtinctions ſhall be forgotten, but thoſe eternal diſtinctions of the virtuous and the wicked; and when the worthy and the good of all nations ſhall be united together in eternal bonds of love. Looking forward therefore to that time, and with all the affection that becomes us for our own country, joining all the benevolence that is due to others, let us with the good patriarch confeſs that

we are ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth; and whilſt we enjoy and are thankful for our preſent happineſs, let us like him wait for thoſe better promiſes of which we have a proſpect far off; and being with him perſuaded of them, and embracing them in our minds, let us direct our deſires towards that better, that common, that heavenly country, where we truſt that the good ſelected from all mankind ſhall meet in endleſs bliſs.

ADDITIONAL

ADDITIONAL

OBSERVATIONS.

THERE is within us a ſociable and attractive principle, page 7.] The celebrated author of the SPIRIT OF LAWS is of opinion, that mankind in a ſtate of nature, (as it is uſually called) that is, before their actual entrance into ſociety, would fly from each other through fear. "Man in "ſuch a ſituation, ſays he, would feel no-"thing in himſelf at firſt but impotency "and weakneſs; his fears and apprehen-"ſions would be exceſſive, as appears from "inſtances (were there any neceſſity of "proving it) of ſavages found in foreſts, "trembling at the motion of a leaf, and "flying from every ſhadow." (B. i. c. 2.) But if this be the natural ſituation of men's minds, how is it poſſible that they ſhould ever come together in ſociety? If they have naturally a dread of each other, ſociety muſt

be an unnatural ſtate, and a ſtate of violence, into which none could be deſirous of entering, for that were a contradiction to ſuppoſe their deſires moving them to the ſame thing from which their fears withheld them. Before they could enter into ſociety, their minds muſt have undergone a total change, and muſt have received a tendency directly oppoſite to the natural one; for otherwiſe, nothing but an external coercive power could keep them in ſociety, with ſuch a ſuppoſed impulſe conſtantly inclining them to fly off from it. The celebrated writer indeed thinks otherwiſe, and labours to make fear itſelf a principle of aſſociation. "Fear, continues he, would "incline men to ſhun one another; but "the marks of this fear being reciprocal, "would ſoon induce them to aſſociate." Strange conception! Fear inclines an individual to fly from the reſt of his ſpecies: but ſuppoſe that fear to ſubſiſt equally in every one of the ſpecies, and then it will bring them together. That is, a repulſive power being doubled, becomes an attractive power. The author ſeems indeed ſenſible of the inſufficiency of that principle which he

he had thought proper to lay as the foundation of ſociety. For he immediately adds; "beſides, this aſſociation would quickly "follow from the very pleaſure one animal "feels at the approach of another of the "ſame ſpecies." But if men feel a pleaſure at the approach of each other, where is that fear which makes them fly each other? Thus it is firſt ſaid, that men ſhun each other through fear; then it is added, that this fear brings them to aſſociate: and laſt of all, that this aſſociation ariſes from another principle of love for our ſpecies. It is hardly poſſible to conceive that ſentiments ſo jarring as theſe could come from any one author, much leſs from an author ſo juſtly admired as the Baron DE MONTESQIEU is, for judgment and preciſion, for depth and clearneſs of thought. It is impoſſible to build ſociety on any other principle than that of mutual benevolence. If there is implanted in our breaſts a tendency towards each other, as there certainly is, we have in this a natural and a ſufficient foundation of ſociety, and nothing but a love of novelty and extreme refinement, can make us look out for any other, or pitch upon that above

all others, whoſe natural operation is not to aſſociate but to divide. The primary ſentiment of our nature towards each other is benevolence. And that fear which is obſerved in ſome inſtances is an adventitious thing. In the caſe of ſavages, it may poſſibly ariſe from their being of a different ſpecies. If not, it is eaſily accounted for from the many dangers to which they muſt have been expoſed. It hath been often remarked, that men in the beginning of life are moſt commonly open and unſuſpicious. As they advance in life, the inſtances of falſehood and treachery which they meet with often change their temper, and render them jealous and diſtruſtful. This proves benevolence to be the natural ſentiment, and fear the acquired one. For if fear were the natural ſentiment, and benevolence acquired, the progreſs of the temper would be juſt the reverſe of what hath been obſerved. Fear would preſide in that ſeaſon of life over which nature rules, and benevolence, if it ever took place, would ſpring up from our commerce with mankind, and flouriſh moſt where ſociety is the moſt artificial.

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The point here diſcuſſed is of too much importance to make any apology for this long note neceſſary. I cannot forbear adding, that it is with regret I have produced an inſtance of a blemiſh from an author who abounds with beauties and excellencies. But the more excellent an author is, the more care ſhould be taken to guard againſt any errors that may have eſcaped him.

Behold a virtuous prince at the head of an obedient people, page 10.] A virtuous prince is capable of doing good much more effectually in a territory limited within reaſonable bounds, ſuch as the world is generally divided into, than he could have been at the head of an univerſal monarchy, that vain dream of ſome princes boundleſs ambition. His limited power would there have been loſt upon too vaſt an object, which produces its full effect upon an object proportioned to his abilities.

The purſuit of commerce and of all gainful arts have a ſtrong tendency this way, p. 15.] It is reckoned amongſt the cauſes which raiſed and gave permanency to the Roman

republic, that this brave people never practiſed commerce, nor the lucrative arts. Leaving theſe to ſlaves, their only occupation was the art of war, and this their only way to magiſtracies and honours. The military virtues therefore remained amongſt them after all others were gone, and upheld their empire almoſt beyond its natural period. Conſiderations ſur les cauſes, &c. p. 104.

If it be aſked how far a kingdom may with ſafety extend its dominions, p. 16.] Nature hath ſet certain bounds to kingdoms for the mortification of their ambition, ſaith MONTESQUIEU, Conſid. p. 52. It is certain, that there are in the very face of the globe itſelf many obſtacles to the progreſs of unmeaſured ambition; many natural lines drawn which ſeem to have been intended for the boundaries of kingdoms, and by which they are moſt conveniently circumſcribed. However this circumſtance muſt not be conſidered alone, but muſt always be joined with the genius of a people. If we would form any juſt concluſions about the extent to which a kingdom may be carried

carried without injury to itſelf, the ſituation and the genius of a people muſt always be combined. On this principle it muſt be allowed, that a commercial kingdom, placed in a ſituation favourable to commerce, is of all others capable of the greateſt extent. Commerce carries on a conſtant circulation through the whole body of a kingdom, and opens a free communication between its remoteſt parts. It forms a new and artificial connection, which ſtrengthens that natural dependance which mankind have upon each other; and by its various ties, not only binds the different claſſes of people in a kingdom to each other, but likewiſe kingdom to kingdom in the firmeſt alliances. Where the colonies of ſuch a kingdom are well choſen, it is hard to ſay what bounds can be ſet to it: becauſe every new acquiſition of this kind adds to the public ſtrength, by increaſing that commerce on which the public ſtrength is founded, and quickening that circulation by which the different parts of a kingdom are united.

Then doth a nation, alarmed at the danger, turn back to the principles from which it had departed, p. 18.] Reformation is the great end of all calamities, public and private. They are manifeſtly calculated to produce this effect, and it muſt be the fault of nations as well as individuals, if they are not both the better for them. Nations no doubt would wiſh to enjoy perpetual peace and proſperity, as individuals would uninterrupted health; but it is not for the happineſs of either to be indulged in this wiſh. I beg leave to ſubmit it to every juſt obſerver of mankind, and every competent judge of the true intereſts of a people, whether the war, in which we are now engaged, hath not been in ſome reſpects a bleſſing to this nation; whether it hath not recalled us from that effeminacy into which we were ſinking faſt, and which was but too juſtly complained of in the beginning of the war; and brought us back ſome ſteps at leaſt towards that national and manly character by which we have been diſtinguiſhed in former times: and whether even that diminution of wealth which appears ſo extremely alarming to ſome, if it

is ſuffered to produce its proper effect upon us, to check that unbounded profuſion, that worthleſs emulation in every branch of luxury and idle expence which were fed by its redundancy, and to revive amongſt us a ſpirit of induſtry and plain ſobriety, whether even this draining of our national wealth, which in the eſtimate of ſome is the greateſt evil that could befall us, will not leave us an happier people than any addition to our treaſures would have done. There will always be left, enough for virtue, for vice too much.

If we look back to the original diſtribution of mankind into diſtinct and ſeparate nations, we find that their diſperſion over the earth was an immediate puniſhment for ſome daring attempt, p. 19.] It was neceſſary for the population of the world, and indeed for the well-being of mankind themſelves, (as appears from all that hath been ſaid in the former part of this diſcourſe) that they ſhould not long continue in one body, but ſhould proceed as they encreaſed to diſperſe themſelves into different colonies, and to form new and diſtinct ſocieties. It can hardly

hardly be doubted that this was the intention of providence from the beginning; and it is probable that this intention was ſignified to mankind in due time after the flood. It is indeed clearly implied in God's firſt bleſſing to NOAH and his ſons: "Be "fruitful, and multiply, and *repleniſh the* "*earth.*" Nay it may be preſumed, that not only the general intention, but likewiſe the plan of their diſperſion, was propoſed to them before the time came for carrying it into execution. Accordingly we find ſuch a plan laid down, before the account of the diſperſion of mankind, and the preciſe time pointed out when it was communicated. "Unto EBER were born two ſons: the "name of one was PELEG, for in his days "was the earth divided." I know that this hath conſtantly been ſuppoſed to allude to the actual diſperſion of mankind at Babel; and accordingly it hath been thought right to fix the time of that event to the birth of PELEG. But "the diviſion of the "earth amongſt mankind," and "the diſ-"perſion of mankind over the earth," are two very diſtinct things, and ſhould by no means be confounded. In the beginning

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of the fourth generation, then, when men were ſufficiently encreaſed, God commanded them to ſeparate. In obedience to the divine will, it is probable that NOAH himſelf, with the family that was born to him after the flood, immediately left the reſt of his deſcendants, and moved towards the eaſt. This ſeems probable, both becauſe he appears to have had no ſhare in the future tranſactions of that part of mankind who were deſcended from his ante-diluvian ſons, to whom the narrative of the ſacred hiſtorian is confined; and becauſe there are ſeveral good reaſons for ſuppoſing that he himſelf was the founder of the Chineſe empire. He left his other deſcendants then with inſtructions how they were to proceed in peopling the weſtern world. For this purpoſe it was not neceſſary that they ſhould be poſſeſſed of any accurate knowledge of geography. The earth was ſo favourably laid out, that it was ſufficient to tell them, that their progreſs was to be in a ſtraight line weſtward till they ſhould come to the Mediterranean ſea; and then dividing to the right and left, the families of JAPHET and HAM would, by the Iſthmus of Peluſium

on

on the one hand, and by the Straits of Byzantium and the Grecian iſlands on the other, be let into the different continents prepared for their reception. But they had not proceeded far when they impiouſly refuſed to carry the deſign into execution. They determined to take up their reſidence in the plains of Shinar, and entered upon meaſures to keep themſelves united in one body. For we are told that the building the tower of Babel was projected with this expreſs view, to prevent "their being ſcat-"tered abroad upon the face of the whole "earth." But here heaven interpoſed, and by the confuſion of tongues compelled them to diſperſe, and "ſcattered them abroad "from thence upon the face of all the "earth." This account ſets at once the guilt of men's attempt, and the propriety of the miracle, in the ſtrongeſt point of view. The building of the tower of Babel was a vain effort of men to prevent their diſperſion, in direct oppoſition to the purpoſe of heaven. The confuſion of tongues baffled this impious attempt, compleated the diſtinction of families, and laid them under

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a neceſſity of carrying the deſigns of providence into execution.

I have here ſuppoſed, with the higheſt probability, and not without ſome degree of expreſs proof, that God had ſignified to mankind his will, that they ſhould diſperſe themſelves according to their families for the better population of the earth. This point is expreſsly affirmed by JOSEPHUS, who ſays, " That God commanded them " to ſend out colonies." Ant. Jud. L. i. c. 4. And HEIDEGGER, in his diſſertation on the diſperſion of mankind, ſect. 9, ſays, that moſt of the antients were of opinion that NOAH divided the world amongſt his deſcendants before they came into the plains of Shinar.

In this whole note I have only enlarged upon, and endeavoured to confirm the idea of the great and learned Archbiſhop USHER, as it appears in his annals. And I was the rather induced to do this, becauſe I could not, without a mixture of ſurprize and concern, behold the many different, vague, and even extravagant opinions maintained by ſucceeding

ing commentators with regard to this tranſaction, after ſo clear and natural an account had been given of it by this eminent writer.

Into theſe great kingdoms frequent channels were opened, p. 23.] This was the good conſequence which heaven drew from the repeated diſobedience and frequent relapſes into idolatry of the Iſraelites: and this great purpoſe was effected by their frequent captivities, by the reſidence of DANIEL in a foreign court, by the eſtabliſhment of ONIAS in Egypt, by the diſperſion of the ten tribes, and by the final ſubjection of the Jewiſh kingdom to the Roman dominion. It is ſuppoſed, upon very probable grounds, that PYTHAGORAS, PLATO, and ZOROASTER, borrowed from the moſaic writings many of thoſe truths which ſhine with ſo much luſtre among their errors.

Thoſe antient kingdoms to which providence granted the longeſt duration, were, in their early periods at leaſt, famed for wiſdom and virtue, p. 24.] To thoſe kingdoms abovementioned we may add, as another inſtance of

of this, the Chineſe; who indeed ſeem to have preſerved their primitive ſimplicity and purity of manners longer than any other people upon record. They did not fall into idolatry till the hereſy of Fo was brought in amongſt them from India, which happened not till 64 years after Chriſt. See Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. viii. p. 339. A circumſtance which gives great probability to the opinion, which wants not the ſupport of many other proofs, that they ſpring from a colony planted and formed by the hand of our great progenitor NOAH himſelf.

Unknown to the proud empires of the eaſt, p. 24.] There were, ſays MONTESQUIEU, at that time *two diſtinct worlds*, in one of which the Romans ſtruggled with the Carthaginians for the ſovereignty, whilſt the other was ſhaken by the diſſentions that happened amongſt the ſucceſſors of ALEXANDER. And, in a note, he adds, It is truly ſurprizing, as JOSEPHUS remarks in his book againſt APPION, that neither HERODOTUS nor THUCYDIDES have ever mentioned the Romans, notwithſtanding the

great wars in which they were at that time engaged. Conſid. c. 5.

For chriſtianity Nero perſecuted, p. 28.] "It is obſervable, that from the beginning "of the reign of TIBERIUS down to CONSTANTINE, the Romans had no leſs than "thirty-ſeven emperors, whoſe reigns, one "with another, amount only to ſeven years "for each. Take the ſame ſpace of time "in the Engliſh hiſtory, from WILLIAM "the Conqueror, and you have no more "than eleven kings, and their reigns will "be of twenty-ſeven years one with another."

"This very quick ſucceſſion of the Roman emperors for the three firſt centuries, the violent and untimely deaths by "which many of them periſhed, the empires often falling into the hands of "perſons not related to their predeceſſors, "but their enemies and rivals, and not "diſpoſed to adopt their private views and "animoſities, was of ſingular advantage to "chriſtianity, and made the perſecutions "leſs violent and leſs laſting than they "would

" would elſe have been, and may very " reaſonably be looked upon as providen- " tial." JORTIN's Rem. on Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. iii. p. 301.

This remark is perfectly juſt. Both the moſaic and chriſtian diſpenſations were at their origin tried by perſecution. The perſecutors of the Iſraelites were overthrown in a miraculous manner. Chriſtianity was likewiſe confirmed by miracles; but the different characters of the two diſpenſations required that their miracles ſhould be of a different kind. It was neceſſary that the Moſaic diſpenſation ſhould contract and involve every thing within itſelf; and ſhould be contrived to repel and exclude all other nations; becauſe there was no other way of preſerving the purity of its doctrines untainted, and continuing the chain of evidence unbroken through many idolatrous ages. Its miracles therefore were to fill the world with terror and aſtoniſhment. The Chriſtian diſpenſation on the contrary was to ſpread amongſt all mankind, and to join them all in bands of benevolence and charity. Its miracles therefore were to be ſuch

as might conciliate the minds of men. Nothing of the terrible or deſtructive was here to be admitted. Conſequently its perſecutors were not to be deſtroyed by miracles. Providence therefore wiſely provided that the reigns of perſecuting emperors ſhould in the natural courſe of things be remarkably ſhort.

In the mean time the remains of learning were ſaved in the eaſt, by the removal of the ſeat of empire from Rome to Conſtantinople, p. 30.] It hath been generally ſaid, that this event was one principal cauſe of the downfall of the Roman empire. But imperial magnificence could not uphold it, after all its principles of internal ſtrength were gone. It was then ſo much weakened by its degeneracy, and by its magnitude, that it was no longer in a condition to reſiſt that force which preſſed upon it on every ſide, but muſt give way in ſome part of its vaſt circumference. The ſtrongeſt impreſſion was made on the weſt, and of courſe that part was firſt laid in ruins. Had the whole empire then been united in one body, it muſt have fallen in one body. But by its diviſion

diviſion the eaſtern empire ſurvived. So far then was this ſtep from cauſing the downfall of the empire, that it was a means of ſaving a part of it. Which anſwered two great purpoſes, and doubly ſerved religion. The eaſtern or Greek church was ſaved from the ſpiritual uſurpation of the Romiſh: and learning was preſerved from the fury of Gothic barbariſm to be an inſtrument in due time of recovering Europe from the tyranny of ſuperſtition.

Thoſe ſmall diſtricts into which theſe iſlands were at firſt divided, p. 36.] It may be obſerved that kingdoms moſt diſtinguiſhed for bravery and a ſpirit of liberty, which never ſubſiſted long apart, have ariſen, like the Britiſh, from amidſt ſmall ſtates which gave a long exerciſe to their valour before they were ſubdued. Such were the Grecian ſtates and the Roman republic.

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON HUMAN LAWS.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY'S IN OXFORD,

AT THE ASSIZES,

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE

SIR SYDNEY STAFFORD SMYTHE, KNT.

ONE OF THE BARONS OF HIS MAJESTY'S COURT OF EXCHEQUER;

THE HONOURABLE

SIR JOHN EARDLEY WILMOT, KNT.

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH;

AND BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 1763.

THE SECOND EDITION.

GENESIS ix. 6.

Whoſo ſheddeth man's blood, by man ſhall his blood be ſhed.

THESE words ſeem to admit of two different explanations. They may be taken in a prophetical ſenſe, as foretelling the murderer's doom, that he ſhould fall by violence, and ſhould never eſcape the puniſhment due to his horrid crime even in this life. In this ſenſe they agree well with what goes before. " And " ſurely your blood of your lives will I " require: at the hand of every beaſt will " I require it, and at the hand of man; at " the hand of every man's brother will I " require the life of man." That is, " The " whole creation ſhall be armed againſt " the murderer, he ſhall be cut off from " all the rights of humanity, ſhall find no " ſhelter in the tendereſt affection, the " neareſt

" neareſt relations ſhall turn againſt him, " and even the inſtinct of the brute ſhall " drag him to light." And in giving the words this ſenſe, we ſhould be fully juſtified by the obſervation of all times, which tells us of many ſtrange diſcoveries of murder, of many wonderful incidents which have awakened ſuſpicion, and brought the criminal to that vengeance which never ceaſes to purſue his footſteps.

But the words have likewiſe the force of a law, authoriſing man to execute that vengeance upon the murderer which they foretell. And the propriety of the law is manifeſt. Mankind at this time conſiſted of one ſmall ſociety, under the conduct of our common parent Noah. This ſmall ſociety was ſoon to encreaſe, to branch out into ſeveral diſtinct ſocieties, and by degrees to people the whole earth. But little would have been done towards ſocial happineſs by any encreaſe of the human ſpecies, or by any attempts to form their encreaſing numbers into ſocieties, unleſs laws had likewiſe been provided for the government

ment of thoſe ſocieties, and ſanctions for the enforcement of thoſe laws. The ſecurity of life is the foundation of all ſocial benefits. The ſecurity of life therefore is the firſt object of all civil inſtitutions. Wiſely then, as well as mercifully, did God himſelf give the fundamental law of all ſociety, to the common parents of our race; and empower man himſelf to enforce the obſervance of it by the higheſt penalty that human power can inflict. A power to inflict the higheſt penalty on the greateſt crime, naturally included in it a power of inflicting every inferior degree of puniſhment on every lower crime. And thus was the civil magiſtrate armed with the authority of heaven.

It is clear then that one law of the utmoſt conſequence to ſociety ſprang from an expreſs divine inſtitution. But this being manifeſtly one of the fundamental laws of ſociety, I ſhall venture to extend the propoſition beyond the particular inſtance mentioned in the text, and ſhall endeavour to prove in general,

That

That all human laws derive their chief force from the divine; and that without this borrowed celeſtial power they would be extremely defective, and inadequate to the purpoſes of ſociety.

Every created being that is capable of ſurveying his own ſituation, will find himſelf ſurrounded with numberleſs relations, and ſubject to various dependencies. He will ſoon diſcover however that his primary relation is to his great Creator, and his firſt and chief dependence upon him. From his Creator he received his being, and all the bleſſings with which it is enriched; and on his will depends entirely all that he is or can be; his happineſs, his miſery, his exiſtence. To his Creator therefore he is bound by the firſt and ſtrongeſt obligations that can be conceived; to his Creator he owes every poſſible return, himſelf and all his faculties.

This is the firſt law of his exiſtence; and this law extending its obligation over the whole field of creation, forms one univerſal kingdom,

kingdom, where the ſupreme God rules over every being endued with intelligence.

But if we love God, we muſt love likewiſe the various productions of his creating hand. The divine wiſdom and goodneſs ſtamped upon our fellow-creatures prove them to be of the ſame heavenly original with ourſelves, and muſt recommend them to our affections. We muſt love the Creator in them. And thus does the firſt law of our exiſtence, the love of our Creator, lead directly to a ſecond, that of benevolence, or love to our fellow-creatures. This law likewiſe muſt be univerſal, ſince the principal from which it ſprings is ſo, the equal relation of all intelligent beings to their common Creator. But though in its principle it is univerſal, binding every rational being to love the whole offspring of the ſame heavenly parent, yet muſt the actual exerciſe of it neceſſarily be limited by the powers of which every being is poſſeſſed. It hath pleaſed infinite wiſdom to form many different ranks of beings with various degrees of perfection. As they are advanced higher

higher their ſphere of action is enlarged, and with it their powers of benevolence. But even they who ſtand at the ſummit of created excellence probably have not a power of doing good throughout that whole creation which they admire. To bleſs at once the whole creation, belongs to the Creator alone. The moſt excellent of his creatures have their influence limited far within the bounds of the creation. And theſe limits are ſtill more and more contracted as we deſcend through every inferior rank of beings. We ourſelves poſſeſs but a very ſmall part of that immenſe ſpace which the creation fills. Our knowledge even of our own ſpecies, and of our own little world, is very imperfect: and our power bears but a ſmall proportion even to our knowledge. The circle through which our benevolence can act being thus limited, naturally forms the world into various diviſions. Could we do nothing for each other's happineſs, we ſhould remain ſingle and unconnected. Had we the ability of doing good to all mankind, the whole world would be only one community. We find mankind fixed in a ſtate

between

between theſe two extremes, and formed into bodies which bear a proportion to that extent through which benevolence can operate. They aſſociate together for each other's happineſs, and unite their common force for their mutual help and protection. Laws are neceſſary for the right direction of this common force, and to rule the operations of the public body; a ſpacious field is opened for the free exerciſe of benevolence, which now exerts itſelf without impediment and with redoubled vigour; order prevails; and all ſocial bleſſings are multiplied.

Thus are ſeveral ſubordinate kingdoms formed in the boſom of that univerſal kingdom, wherein the Creator immediately preſides over his whole intellectual world. In theſe inferior kingdoms man himſelf is admitted to ſome ſhare of power, becauſe beings endowed with freedom like man are ever throwing themſelves into new ſituations which require a ſuitable change of particular laws. The great lines of duty are clearly marked out by the ſtanding laws

of

of reaſon and revelation, and by the dictates of thoſe correſponding ſocial affections, which heaven hath implanted in our breaſts. From theſe man himſelf is left to deduce ſuch laws, as the particular exigencies of ſociety require.

Theſe ſubordinate kingdoms then manifeſtly have their foundation laid in that ſupreme dominion which comprehendeth all. The univerſal laws of that kingdom pervade the whole, and give ſtrength and ſtability to every part. Theſe great laws of love to God and man, prepare us for ſociety, and render us capable of receiving every impreſſion, which the hand of the legiſlator would give us for the public good. This correſponds to what we ſee in the material world. The ſkill of man can give various directions to matter, can mold it into numberleſs forms, and compound it into various engines of admirable uſe, and of amazing mechanical power. But this no human ſkill could effect, without that ſolidity, that attraction, and thoſe other general properties which matter hath received from the Creator's hand.

Juſt

Juſt ſuch power hath he who conſtructs or guides the political machine over the minds of men. His moſt conſummate ſkill would be exerted in vain, without that propenſity to ſeek each other's good, which the power of heaven hath implanted in us. Benevolence fits us for all the purpoſes of government; and all the ſervices we render to ſociety, are only benevolence diverſified. All human laws then derive their force and efficacy from that general law, the obligation of which upon us is antecedent to all human authority. For that general law of benevolence ſprings, as we have ſeen, directly from the Creator's throne.

In how amiable and advantageous a light do theſe religious conſiderations place human government! With what new dignity are the legiſlative and ruling powers inveſted, when they appear the miniſters of heaven, delegated by God to watch over the public good, to cultivate all the better propenſities of their fellow-creatures, and to open to them all the ſources of ſocial bleſſings! The ſubjects on their part will with zeal

and alacrity co-operate in all the deſigns planned by their rulers for the public good; while they conſider obedience to them as obedience to heaven, and the laws by which they are governed, as ſtreams flowing from the divine laws. All parties will ſee the importance of their reſpective duties encreaſed, when they conſider that they are equally ſubjects of an higher kingdom, accountable to their common Lord, and entruſted by him with parts, different indeed, but of equal neceſſity to the common good. Every well-regulated government, every little ſtate under a virtuous adminiſtration, appears in this light to bear a part in the great and adorable plan of infinite wiſdom, and to fill up the harmony of that moral ſyſtem, over which providence preſides.

But if religion in general is of the utmoſt importance to the public welfare, it muſt be obſerved, that the Chriſtian religion is more favourable to ſociety, and leads more ſurely to all the ends of good government, than any other ſyſtem of religion can do: becauſe

becauſe it giveth a clearer view of all relative duties, eſtabliſheth more firmly, and enlargeth the principle of benevolence; and revealeth more diſtinctly, and ſets in the ſtrongeſt light all the great ſanctions of religion.

Such is the admirable power of law, where its operation is free, and its order undiſturbed; where human laws are ſuppoſed to have their ſource in the divine laws, and to act under the influence of heaven. But deprived of this ſacred influence, and ſuppoſed to reſt only on human authority, it will appear how defective they muſt be, and how inadequate to the purpoſes of ſociety.

It is the judgment of Plutarch *, " that " religion is the cement of all communities, " and the chief baſis of all legiſlative power. " It is much more eaſy, ſaith he, to build

* Ἀλλα πολις ἀν μοι δοκει μαλλον ἐδαφυς χωρις, ἡ πολιτεια της περι θεων δοξης ἀναιρεθεισης πανταπασι, συςασιν λαβειν, ἡ λαβυσα τηρησαι. Τυτο μεντοι συνεκτικον ἀπασης κοινωνιας, ϗ νομοθεσιας ἐρεισμα, &c. Plut. Adv. Colotem.

" a city in the air, without any ground to " fix its foundation upon, than to eſtabliſh " or to maintain a government without re- " ligion." It will not be difficult to juſtify this opiñion. Take away religion, and the will of one ſupreme and univerſal Lord, and we ſhall caſt about in vain for any principle to bring mankind under government, or to fix them in it. There will remain no other imaginable foundation of government, but either the common conſent and agreement of mankind amongſt themſelves, or abſolute force. Force can give no right, and a government founded on that, may, on its own principles, fairly be reſiſted and overthrown, either by its own ſubjects, or by any foreign invader. Becauſe it is clear, that if force can confer any right, that right muſt always follow the prevailing force.

If we have recourſe to mutual conſent and agreement, this it muſt be owned is a more equitable principle than the other. Much indeed hath been ſaid, and much ſuppoſed, of the ſocial contract, of the power with which it inveſts the governors of ſociety, and

and the obligation to obedience which it lays upon the ſubjects. But unleſs it is eſtabliſhed under the ſanction of religion, this foundation too will be found rather ſpecious than ſolid. For what power is there that can either bring men to enter into this contract, or bind them to the obſervance of it? What if they ſhould chuſe to bring themſelves under no engagements to government? You ſay, the common good requires their aſſent. But ſince, before this contract, all men are ſuppoſed to be equal, if any one ſhould think otherwiſe, or ſhould not have affection enough for the common good, to lay himſelf under the reſtraint of laws, and to accept of a low and laborious ſtation in ſociety for the ſake of it, who ſhall controul his will? To controul his will indeed would be to abandon the ſyſtem of the ſocial contract, and to recur to that of force.

But his own intereſt, you ſay, will oblige him to come under the protection of the laws. And indeed, religion and all its motives once being laid aſide, private in-

tereſt is the only principle upon which men can act, and the only thing that can give the legiſlator any power over their minds. Suppoſing then the intereſts of all men to be ſo clearly concerned, as to engage every individual freely to enter into this contract; ſtill this engagement can only bind him ſo long and ſo far as his intereſt is concerned. The moment that obedience ceaſes to be his intereſt, it ceaſes to be his duty; and the very ſame principle which bound him to obſerve the laws, now releaſes him from the obligation. The reciprocal engagment in this contract is, on the part of the ſubject, obedience, on the part of government, the care of the ſubject's intereſt. If thereſore in any particular inſtance the laws ſhould not only neglect his intereſt, but even oppoſe it, (a caſe that muſt frequently happen even in the beſt conſtituted governments) he is fairly juſtified not only in withdrawing his obedience from the laws, but even in oppoſing them.

Nay there is one grand point ſuggeſted by my text, wherein government can receive no

no ſupport from the ſocial contract, ſuppoſing the conſent of the ſubjects to be freely given, and its obligation laſting.

The protection of life is the firſt end of ſociety; and for the obtaining this end, it becomes neceſſary that government ſhould have a power over the lives of its ſubjects; that the heavieſt puniſhment which man can inflict, may fall on the greateſt crime which man can commit. But it does not ſeem that government can obtain this power by any human grant, not even by the free conſent of its ſubjects: 1ſt, Becauſe government on its part has no advantage of equal value to give for the lives of its ſubjects: and 2dly, Becauſe the ſubjects cannot convey a right which they have not themſelves. He alone who gave life hath a right to take it away: and He alone could eſtabliſh that law, which is yet eſſential to the very exiſtence of ſociety, "whoſo ſheddeth man's "blood, by man ſhall his blood be ſhed."

Thus if religion is taken away, human laws have no longer any ſolid foundation

to reſt upon. But there would be beſides numberleſs defects in the ſuperſtructure itſelf.

For human laws can never reach the firſt principles of action, nor inſpire habits of virtue. All that they can do is to regulate particular acts, and to guide us in ſome particular inſtances of duty. The general principles of benevolence to mankind, and obedience to lawful authority, can never be wrought in us by any human laws. When theſe are once deeply laid by the ſuperior influence of religion, we ſhall then be diſpoſed readily to follow the direction of human laws, in thoſe acts of duty which they preſcribe, to our fellow-ſubjects or to our rulers. But the performance of the act muſt be extremely reluctant and imperfect where it is prompted by no inward principle. Religion alone hath acceſs to the ſeat of virtue, and can ſecure the rectitude of our actions, giving them an intrinſic, as well as an apparent worth, by purifying the heart from whence they flow. Whereas human laws, by taking up our actions at a diſtance from

from their original ſources, only attempt to cleanſe ſome few drops of an impure ſtream.

Human laws then cannot reach the principles of action in any part of our duty: nor can they pretend to reach even the actions themſelves in the whole ſyſtem of ſocial duties. Were it poſſible for them to ſpecify every act of duty throughout its whole extent, this would render them too voluminous for uſe or remembrance. Nay, they are obliged wholly to leave untouched ſome of the moſt valuable branches of duty. Such are gratitude, hoſpitality, generoſity, and mercy. Here is a new world of ſocial virtues lying entirely beyond all the limits known to human laws. So that it may with great truth be affirmed, that the man who takes human laws for his model, and does no more for ſociety than what is required by the beſt ſyſtem of human laws that ever was eſtabliſhed, is a very undeſerving member of it. For never did human laws give to their country, on great and trying occaſions, the patriot, or the hero. Never did human laws, even in common life, inſpire the godlike

godlike deeds of humanity and mercy; never did they wipe the tear from the eye of miſery, or " cauſe the diſconſolate heart to " ſing for joy."

Add to all this, that, both in their intention and execution, they are ever open to evaſion.

Add to all this, that the aſſiſtance of religion is no where more neceſſary than in the peculiar province of human laws, the adminiſtration of juſtice. All their operations here receive their firſt motion from the ſecret ſprings of religion. For from the ſuppoſed influence of religious principles evidence borrows all its credibility; and on the credibility of evidence equity and juſtice entirely depend. " Take away religion," ſays the illuſtrious Roman orator, " and faith, " human ſociety and juſtice, that moſt ex- " cellent virtue, are no more *."

Indeed

* Pietate ſublata, fides etiam, & ſocietas humani generis, & una excellentiſſima virtus juſtitia tollitur. Cic. de Nat. D. lib. 1.

Indeed the neceſſity of religion to the ſupport of ſociety is a truth ſo clear that it has been univerſally aſſented to, and comes down to us ſtamped by the authority of all civilized nations, and confirmed by the experience of all ages. For no legiſlator ever attempted to eſtabliſh his laws on any other foundation. A few men however, loſt in ſpeculation, and ſtrangers to real life have attempted to turn theſe high authorities againſt religion; to make its utility an argument of its falſehood; and becauſe it has been of ſervice to the lawgiver, have boldly aſſerted that it is a mere engine of ſtate, a creature of policy and prieſtcraft. This charge, though unſupported by any ſhadow of argument, has been ſo often repeated, that, merely by the force of hardy aſſertions, it hath gained an eſtabliſhment in the world, and hath come to be conſidered as of ſome conſequence. I muſt entreat your patience therefore, whilſt I endeavour very briefly to ſhew its weakneſs and futility.

How would the adverſaries of religion have triumphed, and indeed how juſtly, could

could they have objected to it the contrary of what they now object, and could they have ſhewn that it is wholly uſeleſs to ſociety! The inference would have been plauſible from its inutility to its falſehood. But to argue—becauſe it is the prop of the world, that therefore it is falſe—is to ſubvert all principles, and to confound the natures of things moſt oppoſite. As the vices make a vain pretence to the advantages of virtue, falſehood may have its accidental and temporary uſes in the indirect ways of fraud; but all this only under the diſguiſe and outward garb of truth. But, to be the baſis of public utility, to be uniformly and invariably uſeful, is the ſure and genuine character of truth and virtue. For indeed the connection between theſe three, virtue, utility, and truth, is ſo ſtrong, that they have often, by very ingenious men, been miſtaken for each other; and the whole nature of virtue hath been ſuppoſed at one time to conſiſt in utility, at another in truth.

The very ſuppoſition that religion was choſen by the legiſlator on account of its utility,

utility, ſuppoſes its utility to be antecedent to and independent of all human laws. It hath therefore a foundation in the nature of things, that is, a foundation in truth.

All political laws are by their own nature confined to ſome political body, that is, to a ſmall number of mankind. But religion is an univerſal principle, and the common ſupport of all political inſtitutions. To make religion then ſpring from political laws, is to make them act beyond their proper limits, and to make a partial law give birth to an univerſal; which is the ſame kind of ſoleciſm, as if it ſhould be aſſerted, that the laws of a province which muſt be founded in the laws of a nation, are themſelves the foundation of the national laws.

Again. Either religion reſts on human authority alone, or it is ſupported likewiſe by arguments and proofs. If it is ſupported by arguments and proofs ariſing from clear principles of reaſon, and from the viſible works of the creation itſelf, then muſt it be allowed to have a foundation in reaſon, in nature,

nature, and in truth, unleſs theſe arguments can be refuted: it can never be called the creature of policy and prieſtcraft, unleſs it can be ſhewn that theſe boaſted principles of reaſon, theſe viſible proofs ſtamped on the works of the creation, are all an illuſion raiſed by * prieſts and ſtateſmen, and ſubſiſting only in weak and credulous minds. But if religion is ſaid on the other hand, to reſt on human authority alone, unſupported by arguments or proofs, then did the laws create that from which the laws derive their greateſt force; and then is human authority itſelf the only ſupport of that by which human authority is allowed to be ſupported.

But this poſition is not only falſe in its principles, but likewiſe contradictory to the cleareſt and beſt authenticated facts.

It cannot be pretended that any lawgiver ever gave, or aſſumed to give, the firſt impreſſions, the original ideas of religion. On the

* Prieſts ſurely ſhould be acquitted of all ſhare in the invention of religion, ſince nothing ſeems clearer, than that religion itſelf muſt have been antecedent to the prieſts of religion.

the contrary it appears, that they applied it only as a perſuaſion already ſubſiſting, already eſtabliſhed on principles very different from that of human authority. This is the language of the ancient Roman law. " * Let men approach the gods with pu- " rity, with piety, without oſtentation. The " tranſgreſſion of this law, the God him- " ſelf will avenge." It is clear that this law ſuppoſes the religious principles which it applies already to ſubſiſt, and the minds of thoſe to whom it is addreſſed to be already under the influence of religious ſanctions.

The moſt ancient lawgivers are known to have claimed a divine commiſſion for the eſtabliſhment of their laws. But this claim could never have been ſet up unleſs on the antecedent belief of a Deity and a Providence. Vain muſt have been their attempt to eſtabliſh their laws under the ſanction of ſome

* Ad Divos adeunto caſte: pietatem adhibento: opes amovento. Qui ſecus faxit, Deus ipſe vindex erit.

ſome heavenly power, had there been no belief of an heavenly power; had the people been originally atheiſts, and had the laws been obliged firſt to create the gods, and then to aſſume their authority.

But, to put the adverſaries of religion to ſilence, the ancient lawgivers themſelves clearly refute this calumny. They do not pretend to impoſe the belief of the Deity on the minds of the vulgar, by any art, or by any authority whatſoever; but appeal to the univerſal voice of nature for the confirmation of this doctrine. Thus Zaleucus, the celebrated lawgiver of the Locrians, tells his ſubjects *, "That they muſt firſt of all "firmly believe the exiſtence of the gods: "but that in order to be convinced of this "truth, they need only contemplate the "heavens, the world, the wiſe diſpoſition "and order that prevail throughout the "whole

* Τυς κατοικυντας την πολιν και την χωραν, παντας πρωτον πεπεισθαι χρη και νομιζειν θεους ειναι, και αναβλεποντας εις ὐρανον, και τον κοσμον, και την εν αὐτοις διακοσμησιν, και ταξιν. ὡ γαρ τυχης, ὐδ' ανθρωπων ειναι δημιουργηματα. Stobæus, p. 279.

" whole ſyſtem: for theſe could never be " the effects of chance, or the work of any " human ſkill." This proceeding plainly cut off all poſſibility of impoſition: ſince the principles of religion were drawn from a ſource that lay open to every ones inſpection and examination. He that would overthrow theſe principles muſt refute, not the legiſlator, but the creation.

The reſult of all is, that laws are founded, and can only be founded, on the ROCK OF RELIGION.

And if we regard them in this light they muſt demand our higheſt veneration, as not being merely the work of human policy, but as the ordinance of God. On this foundation human inſtitutions riſe ſecure, and acquire a ſtability that nothing elſe can give them; the laws of men come armed in the authority of their divine original; and as far as they are calculated to anſwer the great ends of providence in the appointment of government, to protect innocence, to ſecure the juſt liberties of mankind, and to pro-

mote the public good, our obedience to them muſt be conſidered, as paid ultimately to the will of that great and ſupreme Law-giver, " whoſe kingdom ruleth over all."

" Wherefore," to conclude in the words of the excellent Hooker *, " of law there can " be no leſs acknowledged, than that her " ſeat is the boſom of God, her voice the " harmony of the world: all things in hea- " ven and earth do her homage, the very " leaſt as feeling her care, and the greateſt " as not exempted from her power: both " angels, and men, and creatures of what " condition ſoever, though each in different " ſort and manner, yet all with uniform " conſent, admiring her as the mother of " their peace and joy."

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* Eccleſ. Pol. Concluſion of B. 1.

GOVERN-

GOVERNMENT A DIVINE INSTITUTION.

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

AT ST. MARY'S,

ON THE TWENTY-NINTH OF MAY

1765.

ROM. xiii. 1.

Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers:

For there is no power but of God:

The powers that be are ordained of God.

IN a book containing a plain narrative of ſome tranſactions that paſſed in a very obſcure corner of the world, together with ſome epiſtles occaſionally addreſſed to the firſt ſcattered ſocieties of a new and neglected religion; in a book of this nature, the production of a country which lay far removed from the ſeats of empire and learning, and compoſed chiefly by men who were of the loweſt rank in this deſpiſed country: in ſuch a book we find a better account of all moral and ſocial duties, than is any where elſe to be met with. A ſtriking

proof of the divinity of the goſpel! For ſince it had its origin amongſt a people hidden from the beams of human wiſdom and human glory, that truth which ſhines in it with a luſtre far ſurpaſſing the brighteſt works of human genius, muſt be derived from a fountain of diviner light. It muſt have been "the Lord of heaven and earth, "who, hiding theſe things from the wiſe "and prudent, hath revealed them unto "babes."

This ſuperiority of the goſpel is not confined merely to the circle of private and moral virtues, but extends alike to public. A few lines of an apoſtle furniſh us with deeper and more valuable political truths, than we can ever extract from philoſophy, were we to drain all its ſources. They ſhew us the true foundation and end of government, and ſtrengthen the bands which hold its different parts together, in a manner which ſhames the pride of ſyſtems.

It will not be thought foreign to the occaſion of this ſolemnity to enlarge on this ſubject, to enter a little farther into this

ſyſtem

ſyſtem of ſacred politics, and to draw forth ſome of the important truths which it contains, either by way of explanation or inference.

The apoſtle lays down as the baſis of his reaſoning this general and fundamental principle, that "there is no power but of "God." All who acknowledge a God muſt admit, that God is the fountain of all power, and that from him all created power muſt be derived. From this general principle, which cannot be controverted, this conſequence is clearly deduced, that all the powers of government, all the powers exerted in forming, regulating, and ſtrengthening ſociety, are derived from God: "the "powers that be are ordained of God."

The Creator hath imparted to the human race a certain meaſure of power and abilities. This divine gift it is their duty to improve, and to employ it to the ends for which it was given, their own happineſs and the good of others. It therefore becomes their duty to place themſelves in ſuch a ſituation as may give them an opportunity

of improving and exerting theſe abilities to this beneficial end. But the degree of improvement to which theſe abilities can be carried in a ſtate of diſperſion and ſolitude, is very ſmall. It is only in a ſocial ſtate that they can be brought to any conſiderable degree of perfection.

That power which is originally diſtributed amongſt individuals in ſmall proportions, is by combination multiplied and encreaſed, as far as their union can be carried. But the mere combination of power in itſelf creates only a brute force: which without a right direction, may be deſtructive as well as beneficial. It is neceſſary that the public force ſhould be directed for the public good. There muſt be a combination of wiſdom as well as of power. Hence the neceſſity of legiſlation. The public wiſdom works on thoſe materials which hitherto had only ſtrength without beauty or order, and forms the rude maſs into a ſtructure of fair proportions. As the ſtone lying on the ſurface of the earth differs from the ſtone worked into a building, ſo differs the individual man unconnected with others, from

from the ſame individual acting in a ſocial ſtate. A ſingle ſtone, whatever may be its ſolidity or the beauty of its poliſhed ſurface, can be of no great value; but when fitted and framed with many others into an uſeful building, it forms the ſolid foundation, ſtrengthens the lofty pillar, or connects the expanded arch. No leſs is the difference between the individual and the ſocial man. He who in a ſtate of diſperſion would find full exerciſe for all his abilities in his own perſonal defence, is lifted in ſociety far above all perſonal concerns. He now acts for thouſands, he works on ſome extenſive plan of public utility, he becomes the ſupport of a ſtate, and preſides like a guardian angel over the public weal.

The rudiments of ſociety which nature itſelf hath laid in families, are now made to open and expand. Thoſe firſt and tendereſt affections, which in a ſtate of ſavage nature were liable to be violated by every rude and barbarous hand, are now encloſed within other wide-ſpreading affections, and thereby ſecured from violence. Domeſtic and kindred love are embraced and ſtrengthened by the love of our country.

Innocence

Innocence here finds protection, all the gentler qualities are brought forward, and the milder virtues flouriſh in ſafety; whilſt the rougher and more hardy, now civilized, are employed in their defence and patronage.

Every private virtue is now employed for the general advantage. Virtue becomes the public property, and is inveſted with public power. Whilſt vice alone remains with the weakneſs of the individual, and is left expoſed to public hatred and open perſecution.

Even ſelfiſhneſs is now made to act for the public good. Becauſe no one can purſue his own advantage without promoting at the ſame time that of the public. Induſtry and abilities, though ſtimulated only by ſelf-intereſt, become a public benefit. All uſeful arts are promoted and improved; commerce is extended; and the public is enriched and ſtrengthened. Thoſe ſmall ſtreams which flow at firſt for private good only, unite in their courſe, and fill at length the tide of public and national proſperity.

It is not the leaſt advantage of that order which prevails in a well regulated ſociety, that all its members have their peculiar uſe. Hence the whole public buſineſs is carried on with more expedition and ſucceſs. Every branch of art is brought to its higheſt degree of cultivation. Genius releaſed from other cares bends its whole force to the cultivation of truth, and reaps its harveſts in every field of ſcience.

Government then is a divine inſtitution, becauſe it is the clear and natural reſult of laws eſtabliſhed by the author of our nature. Human nature ſeeking its own happineſs and improvement, finds them no where but under laws and government. All our good qualities in a ſavage ſtate would be ſtifled and oppreſſed long before they came to maturity, whilſt our evil ones would ſpread and luxuriate. Virtue would by no means be able to contend with vice, if they ſtood ſingle. Virtue therefore takes refuge in the bulwark of laws, whilſt vice is left to maintain itſelf as it can by its own ſtrength and ſubtlety.

" The

" The powers that be" are thus ordained of God.

The apoſtle's expreſſion is general and comprehenſive; "the powers that be." It cannot therefore be confined merely to the government under which he himſelf lived, or to thoſe forms of government only which ſubſiſted in his own time: much leſs can it be confined to any one ſpecies of government, or to any ſingle kind of authority and rule, to the excluſion and proſcription of all others. Neither yet doth it ſanctify uſurpation, by ſupporting the claim of any one who may by violence ſeize on authority to which he hath no right, and be for a while in poſſeſſion; as if the powers that happen at any time to exiſt, however confeſſedly uſurped, were ordained of God.

All the different forms of government ſpring up alike from thoſe ſeeds of power which the Almighty hath ſcattered amongſt his creatures. They all reſult from the ſame univerſal law of the public good, and riſe on the ſame foundation of divine appointment. Power is naturally moulded into different

different forms, as circumſtances and conjunctures give it a different determination.

The ſimpleſt forms of government naturally took place in the earlieſt ages. The more complex were the effect of caution and long experience, and were invented and applied to guard againſt the inconveniences which had been felt from thoſe ſimpler forms.

Mankind are not reſtricted by the force of the apoſtle's doctrine from making improvements in government. They are only with-held from ſuch changes as tend to corrupt and deſtroy it. For the ſame conſiderations which ſhew that government in general is the appointment of heaven, ſhew that it muſt be agreeable to the ſame divine appointment to improve every form of government. Becauſe if our powers are to be put into a ſtate of improvement, they ought to be put into the beſt ſtate.

If amendments in government are ſuppoſed not to be conformable to the divine appointment, becauſe they are deviations from that plan which was before allowed

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to be of divine appointment, then muſt we recur back to the firſt form of government, and our obedience to the ordinance of God would depend on the ſolution of a very doubtful queſtion, namely, what was that original form? And even ſuppoſing this knowledge to be recovered, yet till we could bring things back to their firſt ſtate, and new model the world, we muſt ſuppoſe more than half the world to live in open rebellion againſt the ordinance of God.

Theſe opinions are viſionary and unnatural. All human inſtitutions muſt be changeable. Government is in its own nature a fluctuating thing, and cannot long remain fixed to any certain point. And therefore we may be ſure that the appointment of heaven doth not require in it that permanency and ſtability of which man is not capable, nor renders every change in what is naturally changeable, a violation of the divine laws. It is the duty of mankind to maintain themſelves in a ſocial ſtate, that they may enjoy all the bleſſings which belong to ſociety. In order to obtain this purpoſe of heaven, and provide for the happineſs

pineſs of mankind, God hath no where preſcribed any particular form, or laid down any invariable model of ſociety, but hath left it wholly to their own wiſdom and experience to frame for themſelves ſuch a conſtitution as their own particular exigencies and ſituation may require. Hence government hath always received various modifications in different ages and under different ſituations: and that model which was in its firſt ſtate extremely artleſs and rude, hath in its progreſs received various additions, and hath been finiſhed with all the refinements of the moſt ſkilful policy. And ſo far are we from having any grounds to affirm that theſe improvements are contrary to the will of heaven, that whoever hath beſtowed any ſerious reflection on the events of hiſtory muſt perceive, that providence hath plainly preſided in the formation and growth of ſtates; and hath aſſiſted in leading them through a gradual courſe of improvement, by conducting human affairs to ſuch an iſſue as man's wiſdom could never have contrived. Often hath the proſperity of a ſtate been brought about by means which ſeemed to threaten only its deſtruction.

tion. And often have the liberties of a people been in the event eſtabliſhed by thoſe meaſures which uſurpation or tyranny had planned to enſlave them.

He who bids the infant veſſels to expand, and by an unſeen aid leads the miniature form to the proportion and ſtrength of manhood, He it is who rules the growth of ſtates, and brings to maturity the firſt imperfect rudiments of government. The ſtrength which he imparts, becomes in both caſes the ſtrength of man; and man is accountable for his uſe and application of it.

There is, through the whole duration of ſtates, a perpetual ſtruggle between the virtuous and the wicked. The virtuous labour continually, againſt all the efforts of the wicked and licentious to the contrary, to maintain the public good, and to apply the public ſtrength and power to thoſe purpoſes for which they were beſtowed by providence. As theſe powers in their turns prevail, the ſtate riſes, fluctuates, or declines. Providence in the mean time favours the cauſe of virtue by ſeaſonable diſpenſations

of

of public bleſſings or public calamities: giving ſucceſs to virtue, or making it glorious even in adverſity: loading with a curſe proſperous wickedneſs, marking it in the end with ſome ſignal diſgrace, and making even its ſucceſs ruinous: bringing a corrupt people to deſpair, and when they are humbled and amended by diſtreſs, raiſing them again to glory by ſome ſtrange revolution: but if they can no longer be reformed by calamities, leaving them to that deſtruction which their own corruption will certainly bring on, and abandoning them to that ſevere vengeance which vice, whether national or private, never fails to take upon itſelf.

It is neceſſary to make a diſtinction here between the powers of government, and the perſon who may be inveſted with that power. It is the power which Saint Paul tells us is ordained of God. He affirms nothing of the perſon. His meaning therefore cannot be, that every magiſtrate is elevated to the high ſtation which he poſſeſſes by the expreſs deſignation of heaven; though we cannot doubt, that ſome choſen

men have, in times of difficulty, been raiſed up immediately by the hand of heaven, and inveſted with power to carry on ſome extraordinary work of providence.

Upon the whole then the apoſtle's doctrine is, that government is a divine inſtitution, as reſulting immediately from thoſe laws of our nature which the Creator himſelf hath eſtabliſhed, and as being the neceſſary means of carrying into effect the purpoſe of heaven for the improvement of our nature, and the happineſs of mankind: and conſequently that every form of government ariſing on theſe general principles, and adapted to anſwer theſe gracious purpoſes of providence, ſtands on this foundation of an heavenly ordinance; and every power that is duly eſtabliſhed, THE CONSTITUTION OF EVERY COUNTRY, BECOMES A SACRED THING, which it is the duty of all degrees of men to maintain, and to guard from profane violation.

In what hath been hitherto advanced it hath been ſuppoſed that the end of this divine inſtitution of government is the public

public weal: and I have preſumed it to be the beſt proof of its divine inſtitution, to ſhew that it is calculated to promote this end. The apoſtle ſuppoſes the ſame, as will manifeſtly appear from a bare recital of ſome verſes following the text. "For "rulers, ſays he, are not a terror to good "works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then "not be afraid of the power? Do that "which is good, and thou ſhalt have "praiſe of the ſame. For he is the mi-"niſter of God to thee for good. But if "thou do that which is evil, be afraid; "for he beareth not the ſword in vain: "for he is the miniſter of God, a reven-"ger, to execute wrath upon him that "doeth evil."

Words cannot expreſs more ſtrongly than theſe do the benevolent intention of government, nor ſhew more clearly that it is the duty of the magiſtrate to patronize and encourage good works, and to ſuppreſs and puniſh the evil.

Without dwelling longer on a point ſo evident, I ſhall proceed by clear inferences

from the doctrine of the apoſtle, to refute ſome dangerous and fundamental errors which have been advanced on this important ſubject.

In the firſt place then, ſome have ſtrained this doctrine of a divine appointment, to a moſt extravagant height, and have pleaded the divine right of magiſtracy in defence of tyranny. They have ſuppoſed that all human inſtitutions muſt give way before heaven's vicegerent, and that all eſtabliſhed laws muſt bend before Him whoſe will is the ſupreme law. They have ſuppoſed him to be the miniſter of God in ſuch a ſenſe as annihilates all the rights of the people, or makes them only the grants of imperial bounty: in a word, they have ſuppoſed the people themſelves to be made only for his pleaſure.

But the very doctrine of the divine inſtitution of government, overthrows this opinion of the divine right of the magiſtrate when ſo far extended. For if government be divinely inſtituted for the public good, then he by whom government

ment is adminiſtered can only be divinely appointed, ſo far as he promotes the end of that inſtitution. If he ceaſes to promote that end, much more if he directly oppoſes it, his pretenſions to a divine appointment confute themſelves, and become vain and impious; becauſe he acts in direct contradiction to that which is confeſſedly a divine appointment.

Government is an inſtitution of univerſal extent and perpetual obligation, of equal force in all ages and countries. Magiſtrates, individual magiſtrates, are called upon in ſucceſſion to aſſiſt in carrying on this great and univerſal work of government. And it is from their being employed in this great work, that the ſacredneſs of their characters is derived. It is the greateſt inconſiſtency therefore to ſuppoſe that any particular governor ſhould have a commiſſion to oppoſe the general tendency of government; and that a partial law ſhould be given, to contradict the univerſal law of the whole ſyſtem.

The ſyſtem of government laid down by the apoſtle, is the moſt great and generous that can be conceived. By making the public weal the end of government, it ſecures alike the happineſs of all ranks of men that enter into it; and the rights of the people become a part of the conſtitution no leſs eſſential than the rights of the magiſtrate. There cannot be a nobler part, or a more amiable character, than that which the inſpired writer aſſigns to the magiſtrate. "He is the miniſter of "God to his people for good." And whilſt he makes the public good his care, eſtabliſhing his throne on the happineſs of his people, collecting around it the virtuous and the worthy, and driving from his favour the profligate and the baſe; ſuperior to others more by his benevolence than his power, and ſtudying only to employ that public ſtrength, with the direction of which he is entruſted, to the public good: he then merits the high title of Miniſter of God, the Diſpenſer of bleſſings from heaven to his people.

But

But if on the contrary he makes his power ſubſervient only to his own ambition; if he trampleth on the rights of his people, and endeavours to erect his throne on the ruins of their liberty; if he gathers round him only the profligate and the baſe, reducing all merit to a ready compliance with his own lawleſs deſires; if he wholly perverts the ends of government, turning that into a curſe which was intended by heaven for a bleſſing, bearing the ſword againſt virtue, and becoming a terror to good works, and not to the evil: there remains only one ſenſe in which he can be reputed the miniſter of God, as he may be claſſed with tempeſts, inundations, and earthquakes; he may ſtill be an inſtrument of heaven employed as the ſcourge of a profligate nation, and may have been raiſed up to deſpoil of their liberties, a people who are no longer worthy of them.

Every degree of power conferred upon mankind from the higheſt to the loweſt order in ſociety, is a truſt committed to them by heaven. Man's free-agency naturally implies a *power* of abuſing this

truſt. But it is impious to aſſert, that man hath a *right* to abuſe this truſt even in its loweſt degree: and as the truſt is enlarged, the abuſe muſt be more deteſtable in the ſight of God, and ought to be ſo in the ſight of man. If you attempt to juſtify public acts of oppreſſion and violence, becauſe the power by which they are committed is derived from God, the ſame reaſon will juſtify every act of private violence, and render oppoſition to it equally unlawful. Becauſe the power of the loweſt criminal is as much the gift of God as that of the higheſt. In both caſes, the conſideration that the power comes from God, is the ſtrongeſt reaſon that can be conceived for employing it to good and benevolent purpoſes, and the ſevereſt condemnation of thoſe who employ it otherwiſe. Stronger and more ſevere in the caſe of public than of private power; becauſe the power was given to be a more diffuſive good, and is perverted into a more ſpreading evil.

If you plead in defence of tyranny that the power comes from God, tell us then from whom come the peoples rights and liberties, from

from whom comes every bleſſing of which the tyrant would deſpoil them, from whom comes their power of oppoſing tyranny?

If finally you plead in defence of tyranny, that the ſcriptures have no where preſcribed reſiſtance to it, it is ſufficient to reply to ſophiſtry like this, that whenever the tyrant can juſtify oppreſſion by the authority of ſcripture, the people will not fail to vindicate their oppoſition to it by the ſame authority. In the mean time if any thing is clear, it ſeems to be clear both on the principles of reaſon and ſcripture, that a malevolent power, a power of doing evil, may, and ought to be reſiſted; that he who employs his authority to the worſt of purpoſes, cannot be that miniſter of God, to whom our obedience is required under the ſevereſt penalties, and that it muſt be lawful to reſiſt him, who abuſing and perverting the powers of government, doth himſelf manifeſtly reſiſt the wiſe and benevolent ordinance of God.

But whilſt ſome have attempted to raiſe the magiſtrate to a ſtate of abſolute independence

pendence on the people, others have affected to conſider him merely as their creature. But if government is not ſubject to the arbitrary will of one man, neither is it ſubject to the will of thouſands. If we hold the benefits of ſociety only by the changeable will of the multitude, we hold them by a precarious tenure indeed. The doctrine of the apoſtle guards againſt both extremes. By repreſenting government as a divine inſtitution, he ſecures it at once againſt tyranny and popular madneſs. If the magiſtrate is obliged to keep continually in view that great end for which government was appointed, the people are no leſs under the power of the ſame obligation. Every member of the community, each in his ſeveral ſtation, is obliged to ſecond and ſupport the views of the magiſtrate for the public good. In vain indeed would be the vigilance of the magiſtrate, in vain his utmoſt efforts for the public good, if this were not the caſe, if the people were at liberty at any time to deſert or to oppoſe him.

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The clear truth is, that government being the appointment of God, lays all who belong to it under the ſtrongeſt mutual obligations. That which was before a confuſed maſs of people claſhing with each other, in purſuit of a thouſand diſcordant aims, is hereby reduced into a regular body, and receives one general direction. The members of this body have neceſſarily different offices, but all of equal uſe and importance. Theſe offices are ſo far from interfering, that they depend on, and naturally ſupport each other; and every part whilſt it performs its proper functions, contributes to the ſtrength and ſtability of the whole frame. The ſtrength of the community, by which the operations of government are to be carried on, lies in the body of the people. The conduct of this ſtrength belongs to the magiſtrate; and if he is bound to direct this public ſtrength aright, the people are bound on their part to yield to his direction. In carrying on the work of government, the concurrence of all is neceſſary. And whoever deſerts or oppoſes this ſalutary work, and in any part weakens or diſſolves the bands of that frame, which

was

was conſtructed in conformity to the divine will, he puts his hand to the deſtruction of that which was intended by God to be an inſtrument of order and happineſs amongſt mankind, and leads the way to confuſion and every evil work. Juſtly therefore is an attempt ſo big with ruin to mankind, repreſented by the apoſtle as an act of impiety againſt God: "whoſoever reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God." And juſtly are all deterred from it by a proſpect of the moſt dreadful penalty: "they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation."

The concluſion ariſing from theſe evangelical principles of government with reſpect to ourſelves, is, that all ranks amongſt us ſhould unite in purſuing the juſt and divinely appointed ends of government, and in ſecuring and enjoying the advantages of our own peculiar form.

How much did the eſtabliſhment of ſo excellent a conſtitution coſt our great forefathers! And with what conſtancy and intrepidity muſt they have ſtood to ſettle it

it on ſo firm a foundation, amidſt the perpetual ſtruggles of arbitrary power and popular licentiouſneſs! Liberty with a jealous eye watched over the progreſs of her work, and called forth her ſons to oppoſe their patriot boſoms by turns againſt the dangers on either hand; whilſt at one time the maxims of abſolute dominion, and a ſuperiority to all laws, were planted by abject flattery near the throne: and at another popular fury prevailed, our unhappy country was overſpread with all the miſeries of inteſtine war, and civil rage embrued its hands in a ſovereign's blood: till one daring and ambitious ſpirit aroſe, who taking advantage of the diſtracted times, led an infatuated people tamely to ſubmit their necks to the yoke of deſpotic power, whilſt they vainly graſped the ſhadow of liberty, and were deluded with the name only of a commonwealth. They awoke at laſt from the power of this deluſion, and as one man opened their arms to receive an exiled ſovereign. They reſtored him, they reſtored themſelves, whilſt it was yet in their power, to their antient birth-rights. The conſtitution was again placed on its true foun-

dation:

dation: liberty again wrought on the excellent model: and a few eſſays more brought it to that perfection in which we have the happineſs to behold it.

Our conſtitution embracing in its form the will and aſſent of all, and equalling in its height the ſublimeſt monarchy, unites within itſelf the advantages of all other forms. Our political ſtructure, erected on the baſis of public liberty, and riſing gradually from the loweſt claſſes of the people, over which its broad foundation is extended, through all the intermediate ranks, till it terminates in the crown, is calculated at once for ſtrength and beauty, and ſtands firm and graceful as the unſhaken pyramid.

But whilſt we admire its preſent form, whilſt we tremble at the dangers which it hath already paſt, and recall with veneration the memory of its great deliverers, all theſe conſiderations join to encreaſe our guilt, if we abuſe the bleſſings which we inherit, or neglect to convey the inheritance to our poſterity. If inſtead of that union which

which is neceſſary for the ſupport of our conſtitution, we fall into a ſtate of oppoſition and mutual reſiſtance, and forgetful of the common good, waſte that power in oppoſing ſome other rival power, which ought to be employed in the public ſervice; if we aſſiſt in adminiſtering to the people the poiſon of corruption, thereby in effect weakening the hands of government, whilſt we pretend to ſtrengthen them, and diminiſhing its glory by debaſing thoſe over whom it rules; or if we labour to infuſe amongſt the people jealouſies of government, miſrepreſenting all its acts, ſpreading abroad the ſeeds of ſedition and tumult, and miſleading the vulgar by falſe notions of * liberty, which according to ſome ſtands only

* The great and excellent LOCKE, not greater and more excellent on any ſubject than on that of government, will give us a true idea of civil liberty. "The "natural liberty of man is to be free from any ſupe- "rior power on earth, and not to be under the will "or legiſlative authority of man, but to have only "the law of nature for his rule.

"The liberty of man in ſociety, is to be under "no other legiſlative power but that eſtabliſhed by "conſent in the commonwealth; nor under the do- "minion of any will, or reſtraint of any law, but "what

only for inſolence to authority, and a freedom from every reſtraint of law: with what grief and indignation muſt every friend to his

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" what that legiſlative ſhall enact, according to the " truſt put in it.

" Freedom then is not what Sir ROBERT FILMER " tells us, *a liberty for every one to do what he liſts, to* " *live as he pleaſes, and not to be tied by any laws:* " but freedom of men under government, is to have " a ſtanding rule to live by, common to every one " of that ſociety, and made by the legiſlative power " erected in it, a liberty to follow my own will in " all things where that rule preſcribes not; and not " to be ſubject to the inconſtant, uncertain, un- " known, arbitrary will of another man; as freedom " of nature is to be under no other reſtraint but the " law of nature." LOCKE on Government, book ii. chap. 4.

And again, chap. vi. ſec. 57. " For law in its true " notion, is not ſo much the limitation as the direc- " tion of a free and intelligent agent to his proper " intereſt; and preſcribes no farther than for the " general good of thoſe under that law. Could they " be happy without it, the law as an uſeleſs thing " would of itſelf vaniſh; and that ill deſerves the " name of confinement which hedges us in only from " bogs and precipices. So that however it may be " miſtaken, the end of law is not to aboliſh or re- " ſtrain, but to preſerve and enlarge freedom. For " in all the ſtates of created beings capable of laws, " where there is no law, there is no freedom. For " liberty is to be free from reſtraint and violence " from others, which cannot be where there is no " law: but freedom is not, as we are told, *liberty*

" *for*

his country look on! Theſe are circumſtances which caſt a cloud over thoſe hopes which he cannot but conceive at a time when benevolence fills the throne, and power is cloathed in every gentle virtue: they give him pain for the ſafety of our happy conſtitution, even whilſt the beſt of ſovereigns enlarges his views of public good beyond his own times, and nobly endeavours to ſecure to our poſterity thoſe bleſſings which we know not how to enjoy.

Let it be obſerved in concluſion, that it is clearly the intereſt of thoſe who are in power to ſupport, as far as its ſucceſs may depend on human ſupport, that pure and rational religion which is taught in the goſpel, and is happily eſtabliſhed amongſt us,

" *for every man to do what he liſts*, (for who could be " free, when every other man's humour might do- " mineer over him?) but a liberty to diſpoſe and " order as he liſts, his perſon, actions, poſſeſſions, " and his whole property, within the allowance of " thoſe laws under which he is, and therein not to " be ſubject to the arbitrary will of another, but " freely follow his own."

againſt Enthuſiaſm, Infidelity, and Popiſh Superſtition. This land hath by turns felt the malignant influence of all theſe powers. Long did ſuperſtition ſhed its thick darkneſs over us, and then were our kings bound in chains of iron, and made to bow the knee before a ſpiritual tyrant. Enthuſiaſm putting the mind under the power of inward impulſes, ſets it above all civil ordinances, and prepares the people for every act of contempt or violence againſt lawful authority, to which they may fancy themſelves to be impelled by a divine agency. Accordingly enthuſiaſm preſided in thoſe times of anarchy and confuſion, when majeſty was derided and ſubjected to the moſt cruel indignities, when the people agitated by a fanatic fury trampled upon the crown, and levelled all the ſtrong-holds of government. The reign of infidelity ſucceeded next, and introduced amongſt us that licentiouſneſs of manners, for the ſake of which only it wiſhes to reign. Infidelity tends directly to the deſtruction of government, not only by debauching the people, and ſinking them, deſpoiled of all ſtrength, in diſſolute and unmanly pleaſures; but by repre-

repreſenting government as an inſtitution merely human, it leaves it ſtripped of its dignity, and deprived of all thoſe aids which it borrows from religion, to the weak ſupport of human policy, ſinking the heaven-appointed magiſtrate into the crafty ſtateſman.

Theſe dangers are paſt. But thoſe enemies which have been ſingly defeated, ſeem now to be coming againſt us with their united forces. Infidelity, Enthuſiaſm, and Romiſh Superſtition at once aſſail us from different quarters; and whilſt they profeſs only to attack our eſtabliſhed religion, all paſt experience muſt inform us, that with our eſtabliſhed religion, every other part of our happy eſtabliſhment muſt fall.

From theſe dangers we have no ſafety but in uniting all our endeavours to eſtabliſh the ſublime and ſacred principles of our holy religion amongſt all ranks and orders of men, and praying for his bleſſing upon our endeavours, who was the author of our religion. Theſe principles alone ſettle the authority of government upon a firm and unſhaken

unſhaken foundation, upon the ordinance of God. Government in that light in which chriſtianity, pure and uncorrupted chriſtianity places it, is a great and an awful deſign. It is a divine inſtitution, planned by heaven for the public good: the magiſtrate is the miniſter of heaven: the people behold it with veneration: obedience becomes at once a bleſſing and a duty: and "we "are ſubject not only for wrath, but for "conſcience ſake."

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